ST. BASIL
AND HIS RULE

Rev. Hugh Scott - Charles.

With the author's kind regards
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ST. BASIL AND HIS RULE

A STUDY IN EARLY MONASTICISM

BY

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ὁ τῆς Καππαδοκῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης, φωστήρ.
THEODORET, *Ep.* cxlvi.

HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK, TORONTO, MELBOURNE
AND BOMBAY

1912

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

Some three years ago I was asked to read the *Ascetica* of St. Basil for the Lexicon of Patristic Greek which is being compiled under the auspices of the Central Society of Sacred Study. As the contents of these writings proved to have more than a philological interest, I have therefore ventured to summarize the information which they contain with regard to the theory and practice of Basilian monasticism. And I have been the more emboldened to do so from the fact that the subject has received but scant attention in this country. To foreign scholars I have acknowledged my indebtedness in the bibliography appended. St. Basil himself[1] admonishes us 'not to pass another's knowledge for our own, as depraved women their supposititious children, but to refer it candidly to the true parent'. And in the same passage he tells us 'not to interrupt a profitable speaker, or to desire ambitiously to put in a word of one's own'. Hence my chief endeavour has been that St. Basil may tell his own tale.

The *Ascetica* have never yet been translated into English, and I have therefore used my own rendering

[1] *Ep.* 2. 5.

in quotation and in the Appendix. In quoting from the *Letters*, I have used, with a few slight changes, the translations by Newman and Blomfield Jackson.

My best thanks are due to the Rev. T. J. Hardy for some useful suggestions, and to Dr. Joyce for most kindly allowing this book to appear in the S. Deiniol's Series.

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A.D. 316. Birth of Basil.
325. Council of Nicaea.
328. Athanasius Bishop of Alexandria. Visits Monasteries of Pachomius.
337. Death of Constantine. Succession of Constantius and his brothers Constans and Constantine.
346. Death of Pachomius.
350. Constantius sole emperor. Persecution of Catholic party.
351. Basil goes to Athens.
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356. Basil returns to Caesarea. Athanasius publishes his Life of Anthony.
357. Baptism of Basil. His ordination as Reader.
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358–361. Monastic Life. Composition of *Philocalia*, *Moralia*, and the *Rules*.
361–363. Julian emperor. Attempted revival of Paganism.
364. Basil ordained Priest. Accession of Valentinian and Valens. Persecution of Catholics in the East. Revision of the *Rules*.
370. Basil Bishop of Caesarea.
373. Death of Athanasius.
374. Basil writes his treatise on the Holy Spirit.
378. Death of Valens.
379. Death of Basil. Accession of Theodosius.

ST. BASIL AND HIS RULE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY AND HISTORICAL

THERE is but slight apology needed for choosing as a subject for investigation a chapter in the history of monasticism. It may seem, no doubt, at first sight, as if monastic and ascetic ideals could have very little interest for a time such as ours, which is characterized in no small degree by a devotion to material well-being and a prominent display of luxury. But our very remoteness from such ideals makes us, perhaps, all the more curious to see what attraction they can have had for those who lived by them, and to inquire whether they have any value for the world of to-day. It is a matter of some interest to see what remedy was applied by the Christianity of earlier ages to the disease of materialism with which we are now beset, and to see how far the remedy was authorized and adopted by the Church in her struggles, not only with the world outside, but also with the worldly tendencies within herself.

The early Church had many difficult questions to face, of discipline as well as of doctrine. Almost from the first there had been a tendency among her members

to divide into moderate and rigorist sections. Yet as long as the Church was a persecuted minority there was not much danger of a general laxity. But when persecution waned and conversion to Christianity became almost conventional, there was great peril of a lowering of moral standards. Many ardent souls were tempted to think that there was no salvation for them within the ranks of a Church which was so rapidly becoming secularized. The Montanist, the Novatian, and the Donatist all alike deplored the loss of primitive rigour in the life and conduct of the Church, and abandoned her in consequence.

The hermit who left his home for the solitude of the desert, although he did not expressly renounce the Church, yet preferred, apparently, to work out his own salvation apart from the corporate life of the Christian community. And in the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century men more than ever began to despair of finding real religion within the rank and file of the ordinary adherents to Christianity.

Were, then, the best and most earnest men to be lost to the Church, by inclusion in some puritanical sect, or by seclusion in some distant desert ?

Was not rather this spirit of dissatisfaction with ordinary Church life a force which, if rightly directed and controlled, could be used for the lasting benefit of the Christian Church ? It is to the credit of St. Basil the Great, Metropolitan of Caesarea in Cappadocia in the fourth century, that he realized the value of the monastic movement for the Church.

Monasticism was no new thing in the time of Basil.

Although it had not as yet received official sanction or recognition, it was rapidly growing into a factor with which both Church and State must reckon.[1] The movement, which had at first been largely spasmodic and local, showed every prospect of becoming both permanent and universal. The example of the Fathers of the Desert was inspiring emulation in other lands. Basil himself tells us how he had seen and admired the monks, not only of Alexandria and Egypt, but also of Palestine, Coele Syria, and Mesopotamia. He says of them: 'I called these men's lives blessed, in that they did indeed show that they "bear about in their body the dying of Jesus".[2] And I prayed that I, too, as far as in me lay, might imitate them.'[3] The monastic endeavour was also making itself felt in Cappadocia, and, on its first appearance, caused Basil the greatest satisfaction.

It was all-important, however, to see what form the movement would assume. There were bad, as well as good, monks in Egypt, and Basil has to acknowledge that, with regard to Eustathius and his followers, who first introduced the monastic life into Asia Minor, he had been misled, and had mistaken the cowl for the monk. Thus he says: 'So when I beheld certain men in my own country striving to copy their ways, I felt that I had found a help to my own salvation, and I took the things seen for proof of things unseen. And since the secrets in the hearts

[1] Cf. the decrees of the Synod of Gangra (given in Appendix C), and the persecution by Valens of the Egyptian monks, related in Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* iv. 24.

[2] 2 Cor. iv. 10.

[3] *Ep.* 223. 2.

of each of us are unknown, I held lowliness of dress to be a sufficient indication of lowliness of spirit; and there was enough to convince me in the coarse cloak, the girdle, and the shoes of untanned hide.'[1] The monastic movement, then, had no lack of supporters, but it required regulation and a proper surveillance, if it was to be of real permanent value to the cause of Christianity. It was Basil who undertook this task for Cappadocia, and by so doing eventually became both 'the Father of Eastern Monasticism'[2] and a powerful influence upon St. Benedict when he drew up his rule for the monks of the West.

As we read the details of Basil's life we cannot help feeling that he was just such a man as the monastic movement then needed. We can endorse the statement of Vasson when he says: 'Dieu suscita un grand homme, Saint Basile, pour donner à l'ordre monastique une constitution définitive.'[3] It is noticeable that Basil is the only Father of the Eastern Church to whom the title 'Great' has been given. The work that he did was not only of local importance, but of value for the whole Church of Christ. Theodoret does not exaggerate when he speaks of 'the great Basil, light[4] of the Cappadocians, or rather of the world';[5] or again, 'the great Basil, a light[4] of the world.'[6] There are many things, no doubt, which have contributed to Basil's fame in the Church—his wonderful oratory, his defence of the faith, and his administrative capacity—

[1] *Ep.* 223. 3.
[2] Cf. Adeney, *Greek and Eastern Churches*, p. 158.
[3] *St. Basile le Grand*, p. 8.
[4] φωστήρ.
[5] *Ep.* 146.
[6] *Eccl. Hist.* iv.

but his services to the monastic cause alone constitute a sufficient claim to greatness.

It is well to consider for a moment what qualifications Basil brought to the great task which he undertook, of giving to monasticism a lawful place within the thought and practice of the Christian Church. In the first place, he was essentially a man of distinction, whose word and example must necessarily carry great weight among his contemporaries. He came of a good Christian family, whose social position could command respect in Cappadocia and Pontus. He had wealth and education, and every prospect of succeeding in whatever career he might choose to adopt. Thus when Basil, at the instigation of his sister Macrina, turned his thoughts to the monastic life, he was called upon to sacrifice very great worldly blessings. Riches, honour, family position, and a considerable reputation for learning, were all unhesitatingly renounced. Like a new Moses, says his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, he preferred the Hebrews to the treasures of Egypt.[1] But such a surrender had a very special value. This magnificent example of self-denial in a person of such distinction would inevitably bring the monastic movement into notice and repute. The new adherent to the cause could not be set down as a mere ignorant fanatic, unworthy of serious consideration. And further, the life thus dedicated could not be wasted, even in the mountainous wilds of Pontus.

In fact, as we have said, Basil was the very man that

[1] *Or. in laud. Bas.* 1.

the monastic movement then required. From his own personal experience, as well as from his travels, he had a wide knowledge of his subject, his intellect enabled him to grasp its doctrinal implications, his judgment kept his enthusiasm from extravagances, while his authority as a prominent ecclesiastic[1] in later days gave to the principles which he had asserted as a young *lector* a most valuable sanction.

Further, if Basil was to help forward the monastic cause by his adhesion, he could see plainly that the time warranted some such endeavour. The best men would naturally feel the evils of the day the most acutely. Dissatisfaction with the world as it then was would inevitably lead such men to look for other conditions which might provide a fuller scope for the development of themselves and their religion. There was little thought of abandoning Christianity, if we except the meteoric paganism of the Emperor Julian, but only of seeking some sphere where Christian principles could more effectively find their proper application.

The Roman Empire of that day was not such as to inspire patriotism in the minds of its subjects. The idea which we derive from Basil's writings of the condition of the government in the Eastern Empire at the time is very far from favourable. Basil himself often evinces a deep love for his country, for Cappadocia, or for Pontus, but not for the Empire, and certainly there can have been little in such govern-

[1] On the influential position at this time of the bishops in the East, cf. Allard, *Julien l'Apostat*, i. pp. 113 ff.

ments as those of Constantius and Valens to evoke anything like an imperial sentiment. The social condition of the Eastern provinces is painted for us in very dark colours in Basil's *Letters* and *Homilies*. Bad government had resulted in the direst misery for the poor, and was responsible for great excesses of luxury and selfishness among the rich. The monastic movement was in a real sense an effort after social righteousness.

Again, amid the corruptions of society, the morality of the Church had sunk to a very low level. In Basil's own diocese, for example, the chorepiscopi were found to have accepted money for ordinations, and to have ordained persons whose character had not been properly investigated.[1] Yet Basil never despaired of the Church, however far her morality might have fallen, or her unity be destroyed by doctrinal dissensions. He endeavoured at once to establish her faith, to reform her abuses, and to improve the character of her ministers. His *Moralia* were written more especially for the edification of the clergy. Nor was he himself destined to spend his whole life in monastic retirement. His sojourn in Pontus seems not to have lasted more than three years. But he never entirely forsook the monastic habits which he had there formed, and in the active life of his episcopate at Caesarea he was able to put into practice some of the lessons which he had learnt in the solitude of his retreat. The Episcopate of St. Basil has been well described as being 'remarkable for its concentrated and accumulated sorrows,

[1] *Ep.* 54.

and for the nobleness and fervour of spirit which confronted and endured them '.[1]

That spirit we may believe was in no small degree the result of his monastic training. Macrina had conferred a lasting benefit upon her brother, and he, in his turn, wished that the Church at large might profit by his experience.

[1] Bright, *The Age of the Fathers*, i. 366.

CHAPTER II

THE RETREAT IN PONTUS

Basil himself has given us an account of his conversion—if we may use the term—to monasticism. 'Much time had I spent in vanity, and had wasted nearly all my youth in the vain labour which I underwent in acquiring the wisdom made foolish by God. Then once upon a time, like a man roused from deep sleep, I turned my eyes to the marvellous light of the truth of the Gospel, and I perceived the uselessness of "the wisdom of the princes of this world, that come to naught".[1] I wept many tears over my miserable life, and I prayed that guidance might be vouchsafed me to admit me to the doctrines of true religion.'[2] He then describes how he had travelled in foreign countries in order that he might come into personal contact with those who were already leading the monastic life. On his return to Pontus he resolved to imitate the example of the men whose continence he so much admired. His sister Macrina and his mother Emmelia had taken up their abode by the river Iris, at their ancestral home of Annesi. Basil himself fixed his residence on the opposite bank of the river. He has left us a wonderful account of his place of retreat in a letter to his friend Gregory, whose company he desired.

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 6. [2] *Ep.* 223. 2.

As a true lover of nature he dwells upon the enchanting beauty of the scene. 'After renouncing with trouble,' he writes, 'the idle hopes which I once had about you, or rather the dreams (for it is well said that hopes are waking dreams), I departed into Pontus in quest of a place to live in. There God has opened on me a spot exactly answering to my taste, so that I actually see before my eyes what I have often pictured to my mind in idle fancy.

'There is a lofty mountain, covered with thick woods, watered towards the north with cool and transparent streams. A plain lies beneath, enriched by the waters which are ever draining off upon it; and skirted by a spontaneous profusion of trees almost thick enough to be a fence; so as even to surpass Calypso's Island, which Homer seems to have considered the most beautiful spot on earth. Indeed, it is like an island, enclosed as it is on all sides; for deep hollows cut it off in two directions; the river, which has lately fallen down a precipice, runs all along one side, and is impassable as a wall; while the mountain, extending itself behind, and meeting the hollows in a crescent, stops up the path at its roots. There is but one pass, and I am master of it. Behind my abode there is another gorge, rising to a ledge up above, so as to command the extent of the plain and the stream which bounds it, which is not less beautiful to my taste than the Strymon, as seen from Amphipolis. For while the latter flows leisurely, and swells into a lake almost, and is too still to be a river, the former is the most rapid stream I know, and somewhat turbid, too, by

reason of the rock which closes on it above; from which, shooting down, and eddying in a deep pool, it forms a most pleasant scene for myself or any one else; and is an inexhaustible resource to the country people, in the countless fish which its depths contain. What need to tell of the exhalations from the earth, or the breezes from the river? Another might admire the multitude of flowers, and singing birds; but leisure I have none for such thoughts. However, the chief praise of the place is, that being happily disposed for produce of every kind, it nurtures what to me is the sweetest produce of all, quietness; indeed, it is not only rid of the bustle of the city, but is even unfrequented by travellers, except a chance hunter. . . . Does it not strike you what a foolish mistake I was near making when I was eager to change this spot for your Tiberina, the very pit of the whole earth.'[1]

This description of the beauties of natural scenery comes to us as a surprise, unless we are familiar with the author's *Hexaemeron*. There we find such passages as: 'And God said, Let there be light, and this word was a work, whence sprang nature, than which human thought can imagine nothing more delightful or more enjoyable.'[2] Basil was not the only monastic founder who has been a lover of nature, and has given evidence of his love in the site chosen for his monastery.[3]

Although it was solitude that Basil most desired in his Pontic retreat, yet he did not live there in isolation

[1] *Ep.* 14 (Newman's translation). [2] *Hex.* ii. 7.

[3] Sir W. M. Ramsay by his careful topographical researches has made it possible to determine with approximate certainty the site of Basil's hermitage. *Hist. Geogr. of Asia Minor*, p. 326.

from his fellows. There were already in Pontus and Cappadocia men who were endeavouring to lead the monastic life. These and others soon assembled round Basil, and his hermitage very quickly took on the appearance of a monastery. Gregory, too, in spite of his first refusal, now joined his friend.

It is interesting to notice that, notwithstanding the jokes which Gregory had made at the expense of Basil's rural retreat (out of preference, no doubt, for his own Tiberina), yet he leaves on record his honest appreciation of the advantages which that retreat afforded. Thus he says: 'What I wrote before about our stay in Pontus was in joke, not in earnest; what I write now is very much in earnest. O that one would place me as in the month of those former days,[1] in which I luxuriated with you in hard living; since voluntary pain is more valuable than involuntary delight. O that one would give me back those psalmodies and vigils and those sojournings with God in prayer, and that immaterial, so to speak, and unbodied life. O for the intimacy and unity of soul in the brethren who were by you exalted and made divine. O for the contest and incitement to virtue which we secured by written Rules and Canons. O for the loving labour in the Divine Oracles, and the light we found in them by the guidance of the Holy Ghost.'[2]

Basil also, in a long letter to his friend, describes with some fullness the life of the solitaries by the Iris. He touches on the blessings of retirement and separation from the world, which allow the mind to devote itself

[1] Job xxxix. 2. [2] *Ep.* 6.

without interruption or distraction to the things of God. 'Let there be,' he says, 'such a place as ours, separate from intercourse with men, that the tenor of our exercises be not interrupted from without. Pious exercises nourish the soul with divine thoughts. What state can be more blessed than to imitate on earth the choruses of angels? to begin the day with prayer, and honour our Maker with hymns and songs? As the day brightens, to betake ourselves, with prayer attending on it throughout, to our labours, and to season our work with hymns, as if with salt? Soothing hymns compose the mind to a cheerful and calm state. Quiet, then, as I have said, is the first step in our sanctification; the tongue purified from the gossip of the world; the eyes unexcited by fair colour or comely shape; the ears not relaxing the tone of mind by voluptuous songs, nor by that especial mischief, the talk of light men and jesters. Thus the mind, saved from dissipation from without, and not through the senses thrown upon the world, falls back upon itself, and thereby ascends to the contemplation of God.'[1]

In this same Letter we have a foretaste of Basil's later and more complete monastic directions. Besides insisting upon the necessity of Scripture reading, prayer, and meditation, he enjoins that the monk is to be modest, humble, and considerate of others in even the smallest matters of conduct and conversation. The Christian monk, as Newman says,[2] is also to be the true Christian gentleman. We can imagine that the few years spent in the retreat in

[1] *Ep.* 2. 2. [2] *Historical Sketches*, iii. 64.

Pontus, with the regular round of devotional exercises, and the constant necessity of giving counsel and advice to those under his charge, formed a very suitable environment for the composition of ascetic and monastic writings. It remains now to consider the main features of those writings, and also to decide what are our authentic sources for an account of Basil's monastic ideas.

CHAPTER III

ST. BASIL'S ASCETIC WRITINGS

It can hardly be denied that the ascetic writings attributed to Basil, and published under his name, are at first sight somewhat disappointing. The authorship of more than one of these works is doubtful, the monastic interest of many of them is very slight, while the most important of them are almost entirely devoid of anything resembling orderly arrangement or literary form. In general they may be said to present a most bewildering variety both in their character and contents.

The first place in the *Ascetica* is occupied by three treatises on the monastic life. Their order is as follows: (1) *An Introduction to the Ascetic Life,* in which the ascetic is described and addressed under the figure of the Christian warrior. The army of Christ includes within its ranks both men and women. This short treatise can hardly be attributed to Basil, as both thought and expression are unworthy of him.[1] (2) *An Ascetic Discourse on the Renunciation of the World, and on Spiritual Perfection.* This is a longer work, and contains nothing un-Basilian either in matter or vocabulary, while many of its expressions and sentiments remind us of Basil's undisputed writings. It is an exhortation to renounce the various distractions

[1] Cf. Batiffol, *Anciennes Littératures Chrétiennes*, i. 256: 'homélie banale et apocryphe sur la vie Chrétienne.'

of the world, and to ' live the Cross-bearing life of the monk ', giving also certain details as to the monk's general behaviour in the life of a community. (3) *A Discourse on Ascetic Discipline: How a Monk should adorn his Life.* This last is a short treatise which may well belong to Basil. It resembles the preceding discourse in many of its recommendations, more especially in its exhortations to humility.[1]

There can be practically no doubt that the next three works in the collection, which are closely connected with one another, are from Basil's pen, though they have unfortunately but little monastic interest. The treatise *On the Judgment of God* gives an account of the evil condition of the world at the time, and insists upon the certainty of God's judgment, which can only be avoided by such as ' walk in accordance with the Gospel of our blessed God, Jesus Christ, our Lord '.

The next treatise, *Concerning the Faith,* is a ' simple confession and declaration of our health-giving faith ', with a passing exhortation ' to walk worthily of the Gospel of Christ, in the hope of eternal life '.

It serves, in its present position,[2] as an introduction to the third treatise, the *Moralia,* or Gospel Ethics, a collection of eighty precepts or rules, founded upon the teaching of the New Testament. ' Whatever, therefore,' the author says, ' in scattered passages throughout the New Testament we have found to be forbidden or approved, this we have, as far as possible, endeavoured

[1] On a Latin version of this treatise current in the West in the fifth century see A. Wilmart, *Rev. Bénéd.* xxvii. 226–233.

[2] It was probably written after the *Moralia.*

to collect and sum up into rules, that it may be the more easily understood by any who wish.'[1] The *Moralia* seem to have special reference to the needs of the clergy, and of all those 'to whom the preaching of the Gospel has been entrusted'.[2] They are not specifically ascetic in tone, though it is laid down that 'even in those things which are not expressly commanded by Scripture a man should be exhorted to take the better course. . . . "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."'[3] Yet 'no one is to compel others to do what he fails to do himself'.[4] The *Moralia* are interesting, as showing how Scripture lies at the root of all Basil's moral theology, 'for whatsoever is not contained in Holy Scripture, being not of faith, is sin.'[5]

The next two short *Ascetic Discourses* cannot possibly be regarded as genuine. Neither style nor diction is that of Basil. The ascetic life, for example, is described as 'the life of philosophy', an expression nowhere to be found in his authentic works. These two treatises were probably written at a later date and included among the *Ascetica* owing to similarity of subject-matter.

We come now to the two collections of *Rules*, which are universally allowed to have been written by Basil. Their genuineness is confirmed by strong external evidence. They are obviously by one and the same author, and the longer Rules are expressly referred to

[1] *De Fide, ad fin.*
[2] *Mor.* 70. 1.
[3] Matt. xix. 12. *Mor.* 70. 8.
[4] Ibid. chaps. 8, 9.
[5] *Mor.* 80. 22.

in the shorter. Both are written in the same style, and employ the same vocabulary.

Further, both sets of *Rules* are developments of ideas expressed by Basil in the letter which he wrote to his friend Gregory, describing the life lived by himself and his companions in their Pontic retreat.[1]

The *Longer Rules*[2] were, no doubt, written during that retreat, but revised on a subsequent visit to Pontus when the author was in either priest's or bishop's orders.[3] The principles of the monastic life are set forth in fifty-five rules or precepts, drawn up in the form of questions and answers and supported by quotations from Scripture.

The *Shorter Rules*[4] are three hundred and thirteen in number, and their main object is the application of monastic principles, founded upon Scripture, to the daily life of the monk, living in a community. They deal with practically the same subjects as the *Longer Rules*, but are generally more detailed in treatment. They were probably composed during the years of retirement, but revised and published in their present form after Basil's ordination.

The other *Ascetica* attributed to Basil cannot be considered as authentic, and are of no direct value for our

[1] *Ep.* 2.

[2] Ὅροι κατὰ πλάτος, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae.*

[3] See Appendix A, p. 146: 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.'

[4] Ὅροι κατ' ἐπιτομήν, *Regulae Brevius Tractatae.*

[5] See Appendix B, p. 147: 'We who have been entrusted with the ministry of the word.' Rufinus in his Latin translation reduced the two collections to one, containing 203 *Regulae.* It was in this form that they were known to St. Benedict.

investigation. The *Monastic Constitutions*,[1] which obviously cannot have been written by the author of the *Rules*, have been assigned to Eustathius of Sebaste, but were probably composed at a later date in a country where both anchorites and monastic communities were to be found in large numbers.[2]

As sources, then, for Basil's monastic ideas we are entitled to use the three treatises, *On the Judgment of God*, *Concerning the Faith*, and the *Moralia*, together with the two collections of *Rules*. And as a matter of fact we find that these five works alone were considered by Photius to comprise the *Ascetica* of Basil. We shall be able to supplement the information obtained from these writings by the two treatises *On Renunciation* and *On the Ascetic Discipline*, both of which, as we have seen, may well belong to Basil. The *Letters* also (where genuine[3]) supply us incidentally with a certain amount of useful material for our discussion.

A review of these sources shows us that, while they leave much to be desired, yet a good deal can be made of what they give us. We can form a very fair idea of the life in a Cappadocian monastery of those days, even though we cannot be said to possess a definite and detailed Rule of St. Basil. For Basil's monastic writings everywhere presuppose that the monastic community is already in existence, while

[1] Ἀσκητικαὶ Διατάξεις πρὸς τοὺς ἐν κοινοβίῳ καὶ καταμόνας ἀσκοῦντας.

[2] The *Epitimia*, a detailed penitential code, are certainly not Basil's. Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 106 on the question of punishments.

[3] The authorship of *Epp.* 42–6, which deal with monastic topics, is extremely doubtful.

details of administration are left very largely to the discretion of the superior.

The *Rules*, in particular, are devoid of anything resembling orderly or systematic arrangement. Though they have been described as 'Monastic Catechisms',[1] yet they have scarcely enough sequence to deserve such a description. In their form they may not unreasonably be compared to the 'Answers to Correspondents' in a modern religious newspaper. It is possible, however, to extract from their somewhat disjointed expressions a very good idea of the principles by which their author was actuated. Although the questions are most varied in character, the answers one and all reflect the ardent but eminently practical devotion of their author. Yet the *Rules* are very largely impersonal in character. The author effaces himself, in order to show that the sole authority for his monastic precepts and instructions is Holy Scripture. The Bible is to be the foundation upon which all monastic legislation is to rest. Scripture itself is be the only Rule, and the life of the monk is to be truly 'evangelical'.

In this connexion the remarks of a modern biographer of our Saint are worth quoting. 'It will probably surprise many persons to be told that the key to St. Basil's asceticism is found in his devoted submission to the authority of Holy Scripture. He is so far from claiming any right to go beyond Scripture that he thinks it necessary to apologize for even using words which are not found in the Bible. Those, therefore, who would understand him must divest themselves

[1] Cf. Zöckler, *Askese und Mönchtum*, p. 287.

in the first place of that vague association of the Fathers with extra-Scriptural tradition which exists in many minds; and in the next place of that firm persuasion which many good Protestants entertain, that nobody ever loved the Bible or understood its value before the Reformation.'[1]

[1] R. T. Smith, *St. Basil the Great*, p. 212.

CHAPTER IV

THE INSPIRATION OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

In any consideration of monasticism we have to take into account the influence of two factors, namely, mysticism, or the craving of the soul for union with God, and asceticism, or the desire for a purification of the soul by renunciation and self-denial. The relationship of these two factors must very largely determine the form of any monastic endeavour.

It is therefore of great importance to see what position each of them respectively occupies in Basil's recommendations for the monastic life.

As we read his writings it becomes obvious that, for him at least, asceticism is a means, not an end, and that the aim of the true Christian is union with God. For the attainment of such an end asceticism is necessary—the eye must be fixed upon the mark, and turned away from all else. The attention will be so firmly riveted upon the one idea that even 'the left hand will not know what the right hand doeth'.[1] But the degree of asceticism practised must be such as will further and not hinder the great end in view.[2] The monastic life is valuable, not primarily because of its renunciation, but because such renunciation allows of

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 197.

[2] Cf. *Reg. Fus.* 18–19, 128. *Reg. Brev.* 139.

greater concentration upon the attainment of real blessedness. It is, in fact, the mystical element which predominates in Basil's treatment of the monastic ideal. The love of God, involving also the love of our neighbour, is to be the chief motive of the Christian life, whether in the cloister or in the world. God as our Creator and Benefactor demands the love of His creation. 'We love our Creator because we are made by Him, in whom we delight, and of whom we must always think, as children of their mother.' 'The lack of love is for the soul the most intolerable of all evil.'[1] 'Wherefore should we not love God, if we receive His benefits with gratitude and gladness? for He is the Author of many and great blessings, and there is already in each healthy soul a disposition to love, implanted, as it were, by nature, and not by teaching.'[2] 'We owe love to God, and we have the faculty to love God, which was put into us as soon as we came into being.'[3]

Furthermore, God, as being the chief Good, is the object of all desire.[4] God is our Creator, our Goal, and our End. The recognition of this fact results in worship, prayer, and the unreserved surrender of man to God.

Even though man by the fall showed himself to be unworthy of the supernatural grace and distinction received from his Creator, yet it is still possible for him to attain to union with God, through the Cross of Christ.

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 2. 2.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 212.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 2. 1.
[4] Ibid.

'After the first man was beguiled by the serpent, and was counselled in sin, and through sin met death, and through death misery, God did not forget him. . . . We are not forgotten by the goodness of God, and although by our insensibility towards the kindness of God we have sorely offended our Benefactor, yet we cannot efface His love for us, but we are again brought back from death, and again made alive by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. . . . Nor did it suffice Him merely to call us back to life, but He has also granted us the dignity of His Godhead, and has prepared for us everlasting rest, which in greatness of joy far exceeds all human thought.' [1]

The ascetic trains himself for heaven. 'I long for one gift,' says Basil, 'I strive after only one glory, the glory of the kingdom of heaven.' The doctrine of the heavenly goal is for Basil at once the point of departure and the object of attainment for all ascesis. 'Whenever this divine beauty has illuminated any of the saints, it has left in them an intolerable stimulus of desire, so that weary of this present life, they cry, "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged! When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"' [2] Basil is not afraid to describe the heavenly blessedness in the most glowing colours. But the chief joy of heaven will be the reward of faith, 'the beholding face to face.' [3] The hope of heaven is to be a spur to our life here upon earth. 'How long shall we put off our obedience to Christ, who has called us to His heavenly

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 2. 3. [2] Pss. cxx. 5; xlii. 2. *Reg. Fus.* 2. 1.
[3] *De Asc. Disc. ad fin.*

kingdom?' 'This is the time of repentance, that of reward: this of toil and labour, that of receiving wages: this of patience, that of comfort.'[1]

On the general subject of the motives from which men lead a Christian life, Basil has some interesting remarks, which further emphasize the central position of the Love of God in his moral theology.

'To sum up,' he says, 'I perceive that there are three different dispositions which inevitably lead us to obey. Either through fear of punishment we turn away from that which is evil, and so are of a slavish disposition; or, seeking to make gain by the reward, we fulfil the commandments for the sake of their benefits, and for this reason are like men of gain; or else we do good for the sake of the good itself, and from love of Him who gave us the law, rejoicing that we are thus thought worthy to serve the great and good God, and so we have the disposition of sons.'[2]

Although Basil invokes the fear of God's judgement as an incentive to virtue, 'that we may be able to flee from the wrath that is to descend upon the sons of disobedience,'[3] yet he never assigns to fear the first place. The expectation of the Coming of the Lord is a wholesome corrective to procrastination. 'Let us hearken diligently to that which is spoken, and seek earnestly to carry out the divine decrees, for we know not on what day or at what hour our Lord will come.'[4] Wherefore, in view of the shortness of the time, there is need of a special moral effort.

[1] *Reg. Fus.* Introd. 1.
[2] Ibid. chap. 3.
[3] *De Jud. ad fin.*
[4] *Reg. Fus.* Introd. *ad fin.*

'Shall we not set before our eyes that great and terrible Day of the Lord?'[1] As in the New Testament, so also in Basil, eschatology is a strong motive of asceticism, but not its prime cause.[2] Again, the rewards of heaven are conditional upon a strictly moral life, 'the careful life of the Gospel.'[3] 'Honours and crowns are for conquerors. Who would ever crown him who had not even stripped for the fight? For it is necessary not only to conquer, but also to contend lawfully, according to the words of the apostle; that is, not to neglect even the smallest of such things as have been commanded.'[4]

For the true Christian, then, love is to be the dominant motive for the life of virtue. 'As a son let him love God with all his heart, and strength, and mind, and might.'[5]

With the love of God as the centre of all religious and moral activity, important results must necessarily follow. In the first place, the love of our neighbour is inseparably bound up with our love of God. Thus Basil says, 'It is possible, therefore, through the first commandment to fulfil the second also, and through the second to return again to the first; and so he who loves the Lord, loves in consequence his neighbour.'[6] Hence, as we shall see, it is in the community life that the man of God is perfected. For Basil the Christian

[1] *Reg. Fus.* Introd. 1; see Appendix A, p. 138.

[2] On the connexion between eschatology and asceticism in the Gospels see an article in the *Expositor*, May 1911, by the present writer.

[3] Ibid. *τὴν ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.*

[4] Ibid. chap. 2.

[5] *De Asc. Disc.* 2.

[6] *Reg. Fus.* 3. 2.

ascesis involves social activity as well as individual moral effort. Further, on the central position of this active love of God in the Christian ascetic life Basil also says, 'It must be known that this is only one virtue, but that through its efficacy all commandments are fulfilled and included. For "he that loveth Me", says the Lord, "will keep My commandments."'[1] Finally, we may summarize Basil's teaching on the motive and aim of Christian *ascesis* in his words: 'Since for our works a goal and a rule is proposed, namely, that we fulfil the commandments in a way pleasing to God, so no work can be truly done except when it is fulfilled according to the will of the commander. Let us carefully endeavour, then, in every work only to do the will of God, and so by remembering this we shall attain to union with God.'[2]

The great advantage of the ascetic life of renunciation is that it makes possible the uninterrupted practice of the presence of God and of the imitation of Christ. Thus the question is asked, 'How may we do all things to the glory of God?' and is answered, 'If we do all things according to God and His commandments, and in nothing look for the praise of men.'[3] The habitual practice of living in the presence of God results in a continuous and unbroken devotion to prayer, 'if we are assured that God is ever before our eyes.'[4] Inattention is best avoided when we remember that God is ever in our midst, that His Holy Spirit is with us

[1] John xiv. 23; *Reg. Fus.* 2. 1.
[2] *Reg. Fus.* 5. 3 συνάπτεσθαι τῷ Θεῷ.
[3] *Reg. Brev.* 195.
[4] *Reg. Brev.* 201.

to quicken us with His gifts, and that the holy angels watch over each one of us.[1]

Our thoughts will not wander if 'we carry about the holy thought of God as an indelible seal, impressed upon our heart by a constant and pure memory. 'For thus we shall be partakers in the love for God which both inspires us to the fulfilling of the Lord's commandments, and is itself by them preserved evermore undisturbed.'[2]

The imitation of Christ is also very necessary for those who would lead the 'true life according to the Gospel of Christ'.[3] The virtue of humility is best learnt from Christ Himself. 'For humility is the imitation of Christ, and the knowledge of godliness is the knowledge of humility and meekness.'[4] 'If the soul,' says Basil, 'wonders at the greatness of the obedience and humility of Christ, that such and so great a one obeyed His Father even unto death, for the sake of our life, I believe that it is led at once to love God the Father, "Who spared not his own son, but gave him for us all;" and also to love His only-begotten Son, who for the sake of our redemption and blessedness was obedient unto death.'[5] And in general Basil exhorts his readers to 'become imitators of Christ, and not of antichrist, of God, and not of the enemy of God'.[6] Again he says, 'This is the goal of Christianity, the imitation of Christ in the measure of His humanity, as far as the vocation of each man permits.'[7]

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 306.
[2] *Reg. Fus.* 5. 2.
[3] *De Fide*, 5.
[4] *De Ren.* 10.
[5] Rom. viii. 32. *Reg. Brev.* 172.
[6] *De Ren.* ibid.
[7] *Reg. Fus.* 43. This idea is much more prominent in the *Monastic Constitutions*.

We have seen, then, from Basil's own words that the inspiration for the monastic life is the love of God. It is this which supplies the monk with his enthusiasm. But we are not thereby justified in emphasizing 'the points of affinity between Montanism and Monasticism, by which the latter is seen as a continuation of the Montanist spirit and purpose'.[1] There is no trace of revivalist fanaticism in Basil's presentation of 'the careful life of the Gospel'. The monk is primarily one who loves God, and desires to imitate Christ. He is never represented as 'the pneumatic'. Spiritual fervour is to be found 'in fulfilling the will of God from love of Jesus Christ our Lord, as it is written, He will have great delight in his commandments'.[2] Further, the monastic life depends entirely upon the teaching of Scripture; it is the life of the Gospel, and necessitates no new revelation, no prophet declaring new truths to his separatist followers. In fact Basil is able to show that the monastic ideal is in no way foreign to the true spirit of Christianity, that its life is no narrow sectarian Puritanism, and that its faith is the one, true, orthodox faith of Catholic Christendom.

It is, indeed, most noticeable how very careful Basil always is that the true motive of the monastic life should be discerned. For him ascetic practice is inevitably founded upon dogmatic theory, and right conduct depends upon a right faith. His own training and his experiences as a champion of the orthodox faith convinced him of the necessity of sound doctrine, and he

[1] Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 141.
[2] Ps. cxii. 1. *Reg. Brev.* 259.

dreaded lest the monastic movement should be associated with any of the heresies of the day.[1] He wished the monastery to be a place where the faith was both accurately believed and carefully put into practice. It might thus become a valuable bulwark of orthodoxy. 'Faith working through love' is, according to Basil, the distinguishing mark of the Christian,[2] and it is the motto of all his ascetic instructions and regulations. Thus he says, at the end of his treatise *On the Judgment of God*, 'Remembering the words of the Apostle, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love," I therefore thought it both fitting and needful that I should first expound our godly and sound faith, and then add a discourse on morals.' And in his treatise *On the Faith* he remarks in this connexion: 'Wherefore we choose our words carefully and with discernment, using always such words as may serve for the protection and edification of the faith—at one time making strong resistance against those who try to destroy the faith by the craft of the devil, at another expounding the faith in a simpler and gentler fashion to such as would be edified therein. . . . But now our only task is to make a simple confession and declaration of the soundness of our faith.'[3]

In conclusion we may say that for Basil 'the soundness of our faith' and 'the true manner of life' are inseparable, for 'by these two things the man of God is perfected'.[4]

[1] Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 124. The company of heretics and pagans is to be avoided.

[2] *Mor.* 80. 22.

[3] *De Fide*, 2.

[4] *Reg. Brev.* Introd. Cf. *Ep.* 295.

CHAPTER V

THE PRACTICE OF ASCETICISM

We have already remarked that according to Basil asceticism is a means, and not an end. The end is union with God, which may involve, as the means for its more complete attainment, separation from the world. The monk is he who concentrates his whole attention upon the things of God, and allows nothing to distract him from this all-absorbing purpose. He is prepared to give up everything, if only he may obtain the Pearl of great price.

No doubt it is true that every Christian is bound to strive after the perfection which consists in the love of God and our neighbour. 'All men, whether they be monks or whether they be married, must give account of their obedience to the Gospel. . . . For Christ, when He was proclaiming the commands of His Father, spoke to those who are in the world; and if it happened that He was questioned privately, He would affirm openly, "What I say unto you, I say unto all."'[1] Yet Basil makes a distinction. There is to be a class in which perfection is sought by special means and under special conditions. 'For this cause God, who loves mankind and ever cares for our salvation, divided the life of man into two estates, namely, matrimony and virginity.'[2]

[1] Mark xiii. 37. *De Ren.* 2. [2] Ibid. 1.

The first condition demanded is solitude,[1] namely, seclusion, not from our neighbour, but from the distractions of the world. Basil often enlarges upon the advantages of such a solitude as he had himself enjoyed in his retreat by the Iris. Thus in a letter to his friend Gregory he writes, 'Quiet [2] is the first step towards the cleansing of the soul.' 'Solitude [3] is of the greatest use, inasmuch as it stills our passions, and gives room for principle to cut them out of the soul.' [4] And in the *Longer Rules*, while dealing at some length with this question, he thus describes what he considers are the chief benefits to be derived from the life of solitude:

'In it we overcome our former manner of life in which we neglected the commandments of Christ (and this conflict is not light, for habit, strengthened by length of time, has acquired the force of nature), and so we are enabled to eradicate the stains of sin by earnest prayer and constant attention to the will of God; for we cannot possibly apply ourselves to such contemplation and prayer amid the many things which distract the mind by leading it to worldly cares.' And again he says, 'Each one of us must at least know that we cannot keep any other commandment, nor even fulfil the love of God and our neighbour, if we digress in our thoughts, now in one direction, now in another.' [5]

Yet solitude, considered merely as physical separation from contact with the outer world, is not sufficient. 'Think not that every one within a cell is saved, whether

[1] Cf. *Reg. Fus.* 6 ὅτι ἀναγκαῖον τὸ ἰδιάζειν. ἡ ἐρημία. [2] ἡσυχία. [4] *Ep.* 2. 2. [5] *Reg. Fus.* 6. 1.

he be good or bad; for it is not so. Many, indeed, approach the life of virtue, yet few take up its yoke.'[1] Wherefore Basil further shews that those who devote themselves to the monastic life should adopt another indispensable practice, namely, Renunciation.[2]

'He who would follow the Lord truly must free himself from the bonds of the passions of this life; and this is done by a complete abandonment and disregard of the old manner of life.'[3] There are various stages in the process of renunciation. 'A beginning is made with the discarding of all outside belongings, such as property, empty fame and honour, the social connexions and ties of this life, which are all unnecessary and useless things.'[4] But he who renounces must go further than this. He must practise self-renunciation, self-denial, as well as renunciation of the world. 'Complete renunciation is achieved when a man no longer loves his life, but has the sentence of death in himself, so that he does not trust himself.'[5] This demands that there shall be no shrinking or holding back, but that every earthly good be cheerfully resigned. For 'if we keep back some earthly possession, or some transitory good, the soul, since it is, as it were, immersed in the mud here below, can never rise to the sight of God, and can never be inspired with a desire for the heavenly beauty and the blessings that are promised us, unless a strong and continuous impulse moves us to desire it, and makes the toil for it light.'[6]

Renunciation, then, though all-important, is not an

[1] *De Ren.* 9. [2] ἀποταγή. [3] *Reg. Fus.* 8.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 8. 1. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid. 3.

end in itself. It is rather to be considered as a necessary condition for the attainment of Christian perfection, in that it provides freedom for the soul to develop that which is its highest faculty, the power to love God.

The third requisite for the life of Christian perfection is Continence, or Temperance,[1] which may be described as the development and completion of renunciation. It keeps the soul free when once it has been liberated by the act of renunciation. The monk must therefore form the habit of continence.

In the first place, the continent man will rise superior to the enticements of passion and desire. 'He who is above all passion and feels none of the incitements of lust, or even any treacherous inclination, but behaves himself with courage and resolution in regard to all sensual and shameful pleasures, is perfectly continent.'[2] 'Continence is that abstinence from pleasant things which aims at the conquest of the proud flesh and the attainment of the goal of religion.'[3]

But continence affects every department of life, and is not only 'the mother of chastity and the friend of health',[4] but is productive of all the virtues. Thus, 'He who is continent in respect of the desire for honour, is also humble; he who in respect of riches is continent, fulfils the Gospel measure of poverty; he who rules his indignation and anger, is kindly. And indeed the true observance of continence fixes a measure for the tongue, a limit for the eyes, and refrains the ears from

[1] ἐγκράτεια.
[2] *Reg. Fus.* 17. 1.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 16. 2.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 18.

curious hearsay. But he who does not persevere in all these things is incontinent and unruly.' [1]

'If a man avoids even the greatest sins, but is overcome by one, he is not continent.' [2] Continence is therefore a central point in the truly moral life. It is the suppression and negation of all evil, and the affirmation of all goodness. 'He who is perfectly continent is plainly free from all sin.' 'Continence is the mainspring of the spiritual life, and wins for us the blessings of eternity.' [3]

In order to illustrate the place of continence, or temperance, in the life of virtue Basil employs the scriptural analogy of the athlete and the soldier. He quotes St. Paul: 'Every man that striveth in the games is temperate in all things,' [4] and he addresses the monk as 'thou that desirest to become a fellow-soldier of Christ's holy disciples', while he exhorts him 'to be instructed by the Scriptures in the art of warfare'.[5]

It is, indeed, of the utmost importance always to bear in mind how thoroughly scriptural is Basil's treatment of asceticism. The ascetic life is described as 'walking in accordance with the Gospel of our blessed God, Jesus Christ our Lord'.[6] The ascetic is one who practises with a view to perfection, and trains himself, by means of solitude, renunciation, and continence, for the attainment of the one great prize, union with God. Christian continence is no Stoic apathy,[7] and Basil does

[1] *ἀκρατὴς καὶ ἀκόλαστος.* *Reg. Fus.* 16. 3. [2] *Reg. Fus.* 17. 2.
[3] Ibid. [4] 2 Tim. ii. 5. *Reg. Fus.* 16. 1, 18. 1.
[5] *De Ren.* 2. [6] *De Jud.* 8.
[7] In *Ep.* 4, however, Basil playfully describes himself as 'an admirer of Zeno, Cleanthes, and Diogenes'.

not speak of the ascetic life as the 'life of philosophy'.[1] Further, monastic morality is in no sense Manichaean. Matter is not in itself evil, and Basil has a Homily to the effect that 'God is not the Author of Evil'.[2] Elsewhere he says, 'Nothing, if it were bad in itself, would have been created by God. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving." So also the commandment of the Lord does not teach us to avoid or cast away possessions as things evil in themselves, but to dispense them rightly.'[3]

The degree of asceticism to be practised is to be such as will not unfit the monk for his work. The question is asked, 'Whether he who would practise continence beyond his strength, so that he is prevented from fulfilling that which is commanded him, should be encouraged'. To this the reply is as follows: 'This question does not seem to me to be rightly propounded. For continence does not consist in mere abstention from food, which results in the "severity to the body" condemned by the apostle, but in the perfect abandonment of our own private wishes.'[4] Thus Basil lays down that with regard both to fasting and work the universal rule holds good, 'Do all to the glory of God.'[5]

The 'competitive' asceticism, as we may call it, of the Egyptian hermits had resulted in a considerable degree of spiritual pride. Hence it is that Basil so often

[1] As does the author of the *Monastic Constitutions.*
[2] *Hom.* 9.
[3] *Reg. Brev.* 92; *Reg. Fus.* 18; 1 Tim. iv. 4.
[4] Col. ii. 23; *Reg. Brev.* 128. [5] *Reg. Brev.* 139; 1 Cor. x. 31.

insists upon the necessity of humility. One of the greatest advantages of the community life is that it provides opportunity for the practice of this virtue. We even get the stipulation made in Basil's *Rules* that there is to be no scramble for the last place at table.[1] Humility itself may breed contention, if it be not regulated.

Fialon has not inaptly remarked of Basil's asceticism, 'C'était la rigueur de l'ascétisme oriental qui se pliait à l'indulgence grecque.'[2] Continence indeed was the avoidance of all excess, whether of indulgence or abstinence. The asceticism which Basil required aimed at bodily training, not bodily extinction, at a discipline, and not an abnegation of the will. And, as we have seen, the mystical element, the craving for union with God, was never submerged in the ascetic desire for purification by self-denial.

It is interesting in this connexion to notice the remarks of a modern writer on the question of the place and motive of asceticism :

'The adjective "ascetic" is applied to conduct originating on diverse psychological levels, which I might as well begin by distinguishing from one another. (1) Asceticism may be a mere expression of organic hardihood, disgusted with too much ease ; (2) temperance in meat and drink, simplicity of apparel, chastity, and non-pampering of the body generally, may be fruits of the love of purity, shocked by whatever

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 21.

[2] *Étude littéraire sur Saint Basile*, p. 178. Cf. Basil, *Ep.* 207. 2, 'We, in comparison with the perfect (i. e. the monks of Egypt), are children.'

savours of the sensual; (3) they may be also fruits of love, that is, they may appeal to the subject in the light of sacrifices which he is happy in making to the Deity whom he acknowledges.'[1]

In the case of Basil the ascetic practices which he recommended were essentially 'fruits of love'.

[1] William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 296 f.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMMUNITY LIFE

It remains now to consider how Basil put his monastic principles into practice. Monasticism had already found many forms of expression. The first endeavours seem to have been entirely eremitical in character, but it was not long before the individual ascetics were brought together into communities. In Egypt monasticism developed along two lines, the Antonian and the Pachomian. When Anthony withdrew to the desert and lived a life of complete seclusion, many serious Christians, inspired by his example, came and settled near his retreat. After twenty years of life as a hermit, Anthony was induced to come forth and undertake the direction and organization of the numbers of monks who were now living around him. But such organization would seem to have been very loose and almost entirely voluntary. Thus Palladius tells us with regard to the monks of Nitria, ' In Mount Nitria there are five thousand monks following different manners of life, each according to his power and desire ; so that any one may live alone, or with another, or with several companions.' He also says, ' They assemble at the church only on Saturday and Sunday.'

Although the eremitical form of monasticism tended to die out, yet the Antonian monk still had much of

the hermit's independent solitude, and his life may not incorrectly be called semi-eremitical.

But about this same time Pachomius, a young monk who had been trained by the hermit Palaemon, founded his first monastery at Tabennesi, near Denderah, by the Nile. Palladius visited a Pachomian monastery at Panopolis, and has left us a very vivid picture of the life in that community. It appears to have been a life of the most varied activity. There was a fixed routine of Church services, Bible reading, and manual labour. All kinds of trades and occupations were pursued for the general good of the monastery and the benefit of the poor. Each monk had his own special task allotted to him and a place of residence according to his particular occupation. A minimum of ascetic practice was enjoined, but individual efforts after severer self-denial were encouraged. 'The fundamental idea of St. Pachomius' Rule was to establish a moderate level of observance which might be obligatory upon all; and then leave it open to each—and indeed to encourage each—to go beyond the fixed minimum, according as he was prompted by his strength, his courage, and his zeal.' Thus some of the monks, Palladius tells us, ate only every second day, others only every third day, and some every fifth day. As in the Antonian system, there was a large element of voluntariness, of individual effort, while as yet there was no full and proper idea of a corporate monastic life.[1]

We have seen how for Basil monastic regulation

[1] See Butler, *Lausiac History of Palladius*, i. pp. 233 ff.

invariably depends upon dogmatic considerations. Hence we are not surprised that he gives at some length the principles—illustrated as always by scriptural quotations—which led him to prefer the coenobitical form of monasticism. 'I have learned,' he says, 'that a life lived in common with others is more useful for many purposes. In the first place, even in the matter of bodily needs, no man is sufficient to himself, but we require each other's aid in the provision of such things as are necessary to life. . . . In the solitary life what we have is useless to any one else, and what we ourselves want cannot be supplied. . . . And further, the law of the love of Christ does not permit each one of us to regard his own things alone. For "Charity seeketh not her own".[1] The life of complete seclusion has only one aim, that each may serve his own needs. But this is plainly opposed to the law of charity which the Apostle fulfilled, who sought not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.

'Moreover, it is not easy for one who lives alone to discover his own faults, since he has no one to reprove him, or correct him in gentle and kindly fashion. For the reproof even of an enemy will oftentimes implant a desire for amendment in a man of good sense, but a fault is only properly amended by one who loves sincerely. For "He that loveth instructeth diligently".[2] And in solitude, when a man has no companionship in his life, it is impossible to find such an adviser. Wherefore it happens to him as it is written, "Woe

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 5. [2] Prov. xiii. 24.

to him that is alone, for if he falleth, there is none to raise him up."[1]

'Again, there are many commandments which can easily be performed by many gathered together, but not by one man alone, for in performing one we are hindered from fulfilling the rest. Thus the visitation of the sick will hinder a man from receiving guests, and the dispensing and distribution of the necessaries of life (especially when much time is spent upon such service), will hinder him from a zealous attention to his customary work, and so a great and salutary commandment is broken, since neither is the hungry fed nor the naked clothed. Who, then, would choose to live this inactive and unfruitful life rather than that which is fruitful and in accordance with our Lord's commandment?

'And if all who are called in one hope of their calling are one body in Christ, have Him for their head, and are members one of another, how can we be so, except through union in one body by the Holy Spirit? . . .

'Further, since no one man is sufficient in himself to receive the gifts of the Spirit, but according to the measure of each man's faith the Spirit is granted to him,[2] in the common life each man's gift becomes the common property of his fellows. . . .

'But there are other dangers in the solitary life besides those we have already described. The first and greatest danger is that of self-complacency.[3] For if a man has no one to examine his actions, he will think that he has already achieved the perfect fulfilment of

[1] Eccles. iv. 10. [2] Rom. xii. 6. [3] αὐταρέσκεια.

the commandments, and, since his conduct is never tested, he neither notices his shortcomings, nor perceives any progress which he may have made, for the very reason that he has deprived himself of all opportunity for fulfilling the commandments.

'For how will he practise the virtue of humility, if there is no one to whom he may show himself humble? How will he show pity, if he is cut off from the society of others? Or how will he show forbearance, if there is no one to oppose his wishes? But if some one say that instruction in the Holy Scriptures is sufficient for right conduct, he is like one who learns how to weave, but never weaves anything, or is taught the smith's art, but never deigns to put into practice what he has learnt. To such a man the Apostle would say, "Not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified."[1] For we see that our Lord Himself, from His exceeding great kindness, did not rest content with words or precepts, but expressly set before us an example of humility in the perfection of His love. For indeed He girded Himself and washed His disciples' feet. Whose feet will you wash? To whom will you be a servant? Among whom will you be the last of all, if you live alone by yourself? How can that good and joyful thing, the dwelling together of the brethren, which is likened by the Holy Spirit to the precious ointment that ran down from the high-priest's head, be accomplished in the life of the solitary?

'The dwelling together of the brethren is indeed a field for the contest of athletes, a noble path of progress,

[1] Rom. ii. 13.

a continual training, and a constant meditation upon the commandments of the Lord. It has for its one aim and end the glory of God, according to the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."[1] Such a life bears the same stamp as that of the saints of whom we read in the Acts, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common."[2] And again: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common."'[3]

These remarks upon the theoretical and practical superiority of the community life have been quoted at length with a view to showing how careful Basil always is that his monastic scheme shall be at once scriptural in principle and practicable in application. Life in common is declared to be a following of the life of the Apostles, and the best realization of the corporate fellowship described by St. Paul under the simile of the body and its members. The love of God and neighbour can find its fullest expression in the monastic congregation, where all co-operate in their endeavour after perfection.

In this connexion it is interesting to read a letter addressed by Basil to a community of monks. He thus writes: 'I do not think that I need further commend you to God's grace, after the words that

[1] Matt. v. 16. [2] Acts ii. 44.
[3] Acts iv. 32; *Reg. Fus.* 7.

I addressed to you in person. I then bade you adopt the life in common, after the manner of living of the Apostles. This you accepted as wholesome instruction, and gave God thanks for it. Thus your conduct was due, not so much to the word I spoke, as to my instructions to put them into practice, conducive at once to your advantage who accepted, to my comfort who gave you the advice, and to the glory and praise of Christ, by whose name we are called. For this reason I have sent to you our well-beloved brother, that he may rouse you from your sloth, and may bring report to me of opposition. For great is my desire to see you all united in one body, and to hear that you are not content to live a life without witness; but have undertaken to be both watchful of each other's diligence, and witnesses of each other's success. Thus will each of you receive a reward in full, not only on his own behalf, but also for his brother's progress. And, as is fitting, you will be a source of mutual profit to one another in both word and deed, as the result of constant intercourse and exhortation.' [1]

This enthusiasm of Basil for the common life induced him not only to recommend solitary ascetics to come together and form communities, but led him also to construct cells in the neighbourhood of his monasteries for such as persisted in the solitary life. Gregory Nazianzen, in his Panegyric on Basil, thus speaks of his friend's activity in this direction: 'He reconciled and united most excellently the solitary and the community life. These had been in many respects at

[1] *Ep.* 295.

variance and dissension, while neither of them was in absolute and unalloyed possession of good or evil; the one being more calm and settled, tending to union with God, yet not free from pride, inasmuch as its virtue lies beyond the means of testing or comparison; the other, which is of more practical service, being not free from the tendency to turbulence.[1] He founded cells for ascetics and hermits, but at no great distance from his coenobitic communities, and, instead of distinguishing and separating the one from the other, as if by some intervening wall, he brought them together and united them, in order that the contemplative spirit might not be cut off from society, nor the active life be uninfluenced by the contemplative, but that, like sea and land, by an interchange of their several gifts, they might unite in promoting the one object, the glory of God.'[2] Yet in spite of this reconciliation of which Gregory speaks with such admiration, Basil himself in his own writings leaves us in no doubt as to his preference for the community life as the best means for the attainment of Christian perfection. In later days we find that the life of the monk was often considered as being merely preparatory to the life of the hermit, but there is no suggestion of any such idea in Basil's monastic scheme. He asserts plainly and without qualification 'that the solitary life is both difficult and dangerous'.[3]

[1] τὸ θορυβῶδες οὐ φεύγοντος. [2] *Orat.* 43. 62.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 7, *ad init.* ὅτι δύσκολον ὁμοῦ καὶ ἐπικίνδυνον τὸ μονάζειν.

CHAPTER VII

OBEDIENCE AND DISCIPLINE

In the community life the virtues of humility and obedience acquired a new meaning. We have already remarked how the life of the hermit tended to spiritual arrogance. The Christian athlete who had merely himself to consider was bent on ' making records ' in ascetic austerities. Such men often took great pride in their performances, while they also became objects of popular admiration. Pilgrimages were made to the abodes of many of the most famous ascetics. Men visited them, however, not merely from curiosity, but for counsel and advice. A notable hermit might thus exercise a great and far-reaching influence for good. Being independent of all worldly considerations, he was able to speak with the utmost freedom and courage. Yet such publicity might, in many cases, only further increase the egotism which a life of solitude had produced.

Again, one of the crying needs of the day was a respect for authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil. As we read Basil's letters we can see that the imperial government was not such as to inspire feelings of a loyal and ready obedience. The sons of Constantine, by their vices and their weakness, had lost the esteem and affection of their people. There were, no doubt,

individual governors of whom Basil could speak in friendly terms, but they seem to have been the exception rather than the rule, and we cannot always tell how far he is merely using the language of diplomacy. In the Church also doctrinal dissensions and moral laxity had done much to bring her rulers into disrespect. Men sought ordination who had no vocation for the Christian ministry—in many cases to avoid military service. The ranks of the episcopate were not infrequently recruited from the lowest of the people. More than once Basil complains, 'They have brought shame upon the poor name of bishop.' He even goes so far as to say, 'Exalted office is now publicly known as the reward of impiety. The result is that the worse a man blasphemes, the fitter the people think him to be a bishop. Clerical dignity is a thing of the past.' [1]

Of the want of discipline and obedience in the Church of his day Basil speaks very forcibly in his treatise, *On the Judgment of God*. He there says: 'And when I had spent long time in diligently seeking for the cause of these evils, I remembered the Book of Judges, which tell how each man did that which was right in his own eyes, and gives the reason in these words, "In those days there was no king in Israel." And as I remembered this, I determined that it was true of the present state of things, even though such an assertion may seem both strange and horrible. For, indeed, it would appear as if the great disagreement and strife which now prevails within the Church is due to the rejection of the one, great, true, and only

[1] *Epp.* 92, 239.

universal King and God. For each man deserts the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his own authority sets up his own opinions and interpretations, choosing rather to rule in opposition to Christ, than to be ruled by Christ Himself. . . . If, therefore, order and concord is only to be found among those who all answer to one summons and obey one king, it follows that discord and dissension is a proof that a ruler is wanting. And so, by the same reasoning, the dissension which is now to be found among us, the disputes with ourselves and with the commands of the Lord, are all a convincing proof that the true King has left us.' [1]

There must have been many good Christian men and women who, tired of the doctrinal strife, and feeling the need of some central and definite authority [2] which they could respect, welcomed gladly the regular and ordered life of the monastic community, which provided strict discipline and necessitated the most implicit obedience.

We have already seen how, according to Basil, 'Humility is the imitation of Christ,' [3] and it is noticeable that the duty of obedience is also grounded by him upon Christ's example. In answer to the question as to the limits of obedience, Basil asserts, 'The Apostle has shown us, by setting before us the obedience of the Lord, "who became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross." As also he says before, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus".' [4]

Obedience consists in the submission of our ownwis hes

[1] *De Jud.* 2.

[2] Cf. De Broglie, *L'Église et l'Empire Romain*, v. 166: 'c'est la fatigue de dissensions, le besoin de la soumission, l'instinct de l'autorité.'

[3] *De Ren.* 10; cf. *supra*, p. 20. [4] Phil. ii. 5, 8; *Reg. Brev.* 116.

and desires to the will of God, after the pattern of Jesus Christ. 'For since our Lord has said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me," every judgment of our own wills is dangerous. And this David well knew when he said, "I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed to keep thy righteous judgements,"—not my own wishes.'[1] But obedience is also a social virtue, and is a proof of love towards our neighbour, no less than of our love towards God. 'Even as the Apostle says, "Through the love of the Spirit be ye servants one to another."'[2] Further, the monk is not to be ashamed of accepting obedience from his brother. He is to receive such ministrations 'as a servant from his master, with the humility which the Apostle Peter showed, when the Lord ministered to him: from whom also we learn the danger of refusing such service'. 'We are fully convinced that God is the author and perfecter of every blessing, and we receive these benefits as from the minister of God's goodness.'[3]

But while this mutual obedience is to be practised by all the members of the community, yet there is also to be one fixed centre of authority, one fountain-head from which all order and discipline proceed. Though there may be great variety of activity in the community life, there must at the same time be unity of administration. The 'tendency to turbulence', which Gregory Nazianzen notes as one of the dangers to which the coenobitical form of monachism is most

[1] John vi. 38; Ps. cxix. 106; *Reg. Brev.* 137.
[2] Gal. v. 13; *Reg. Brev.* 115. [3] Ibid. 161; *Reg. Fus.* 31.

prone, is to be carefully eliminated. As there is one aim for all the members of the brotherhood, so also there must be one source of authority, namely, the Superior.[1]

The high position of this official in Basil's scheme calls for some remark. It seems as if the great Saint, who by his own personal example had done so much to further the monastic cause, can never say enough about the importance for the community of a good superior. Basil knew how many had been led to embrace a life of asceticism through the personal influence of some great ascetic. The hermits of Egypt often had companions and disciples who came to them to be trained in the life of perfection. But such disciples, though they might be bound to their masters by the very closest ties of affection, could only profess a voluntary obedience. A hermit and his disciple might separate at a moment's notice, sometimes as the result of some trivial altercation. It was only in the community life, in the brotherhood presided over by its superior, that compulsory discipline and obedience could be possible.

Pachomius, in one of his visions, had seen the angels assisting the superiors of his monasteries. The most implicit obedience was required from all his monks. The insubordinate, if they persisted, were sent to the infirmary until they should repent of their obstinacy. No doubt it was often difficult to persuade those who had been accustomed to the free and independent life of the hermit to submit to the quasi-military regulations of a community administered by an all-powerful superior.

[1] ὁ προεστώς.

In Basil's recommendations for the conduct of the monastic life we find, as we have said, that the superior occupies a most important place. But it is essential to notice at the outset that although the superior is the supreme head of the monastery, yet, owing apparently to the moderate dimensions of the community under his charge, he never loses contact with each of the brethren. All the secrets of the heart are to be disclosed to him.[1] He is to be 'an ensample to them that believe',[2] and to love his brethren 'even as a nurse cherisheth her own children'.[3] He is also to be a physician of the soul, who will have the proper remedy at hand for each man's malady.[4]

Basil lays down as a duty for all who enter upon the monastic life, that they should attach themselves to some man of stern and inflexible morality, to whom they must render entire and unquestioning obedience. 'Seek out', he says, 'with much care and thought a man who will be a safe guide to thee in thy manner of life, who knows well how to lead such as are journeying towards God, who is rich in virtues, showing forth by his works his love for God, and being wise in the Holy Scriptures. . . . If thou canst find such a man, give thyself to him. Spurn and cast aside every wish of thine own, that thou mayest be found as a clean vessel, keeping ever pure to the praise and glory of God the virtues that are put in thee. . . . And if thou thus give thyself to a man of many virtues, thou shalt

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 26. [2] 1 Tim. iv. 12; *Reg. Fus.* 43.
[3] 1 Thess. ii. 7; *Reg. Brev.* 98; *Reg. Fus.* 25.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 52.

become heir to the goodness that is in him, and shalt be blessed above others in the sight of God and man. But if, to spare thy body, thou shouldst seek a master who will condescend, or rather degrade himself, to thy passions, then thou hast endured the conflict of renunciation all in vain. . . . If, therefore, by the grace of God thou canst find a teacher of good works, keep him ever by thee, and do nothing without his counsel. For all that is done apart from him is but as theft and sacrilege, leading to destruction and not to usefulness, even though it appear to thee to be good.'[1] We see from this exhortation what an important place is given to personal influence in Basil's representation of the monastic life. In fact, we may safely say that the whole welfare of the monastery depended upon the man in charge.

The superior was to be elected by the senior brethren of the community.[2] A man with the necessary qualifications being difficult to find, it is better, says Basil, to have only one community and one superior in each village. In this way all rivalry and partisanship will be avoided. Yet elsewhere he expresses the wish that the various communities and their superiors should co-operate with one another 'in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace'.[3] If the superior should be guilty of wrong-doing, he is to be admonished by the senior brethren of the community. 'And thus if there be anything in him that require amendment, we shall be of use to our brother, and through him to ourselves, by leading back into the right way him who, as being

[1] *De Ren.* 2–4. [2] *Reg. Fus.* 43. [3] *Reg. Fus.* 35.

himself the rule of our life, should by his virtues correct our perversity.' [1] But the rule of the superior is in every respect monarchical, and there is no hint of an aristocratic government by a senate of elders such as was to be found among some of the monks of the desert.[2] It is interesting also to notice that in the absence of the superior a second-in-command is to be chosen 'lest a democratic state of things prevail in the brotherhood'.[3]

But although this one man is to have the supreme control of the brotherhood, he must not in the exercise of his autocratic powers forget his responsibility. 'The superior must not be unduly exalted by his office, lest he fail to obtain the blessing that is promised to the humble, or by his pride fall into the condemnation of the Devil; but rather let him be assured that the charge of the many is the service of the many.' [4]

It is interesting to observe how often in the *Rules* the superior is compared to a physician. We know that Basil himself, owing partly to his constant ill-health, had made some study of medicine. Hence the simile would come naturally to him. Thus, in answer to the question 'How are the faults of sinners to be corrected?' he lays down the rule: 'Correction should be applied to the wrong-doer after the manner of the physician, who is not angry with his patient, but fights against the disease. Thus the vice must be attacked, and the infirmity of the

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 27; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 103. [2] Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 104.

[3] *Reg. Fus.* 45. 1. Certain functions, e. g. the distribution of food and clothing, may be delegated. *Reg. Brev.* 148.

[4] *Reg. Fus.* 30. Cf. Benedict, *Regula*, ii.

soul corrected, if necessary, by a somewhat severe regimen. For example, pride will be corrected by ordering the practice of humility: foolish talking by silence: immoderate sleep by wakefulness in prayer: slothfulness by work: greediness by abstinence from food: discontent by separation from the rest of the brethren.'[1] The punishments inflicted by the superior are to be considered as remedial, and endured without murmuring. 'As then we have determined that the superior is to apply remedies without flinching to those who are ailing: so also those who are thus treated should not receive their punishments in enmity, or consider as a tyranny the kindly care which is directed to the salvation of their souls.'[2]

The superior, if he neglect to remind the sinner of his faults, will be liable to severe condemnation. 'He who is entrusted with the charge of all must remember that he is to give an account of each. For if one of the brethren fall into sin, and is not told by the superior of God's judgment, or if he persist in his error, and is not instructed in the way of amendment by him, his blood will be required of him.'[3] The principles by which the superior is to be guided in the performance of his office are thus summed up by Basil in one of the *Shorter Rules*: 'Before God he will be as a minister of Christ, and a steward of the mysteries of God, fearing always lest he should say or do anything

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 51.

[2] *Reg. Fus.* 52. No curiosity concerning the reasons for his commands is to be shown: *Reg. Fus.* 48.

[3] *Reg. Fus.* 25.

contrary to the will of God, and so be found a false witness of God, or be guilty of sacrilege either by introducing that which is against the teaching of the Lord, or by omitting that which is pleasing to God. In his dealings with the brethren, "even as a nurse cherisheth her own children," so he will be eager to give to each one not only the Gospel of God, but even his own life, that thereby God may be pleased and the whole community benefited, according to the commandment of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, who said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." '[1]

Punishments, which, as we have seen, are to be remedial, and proportionate to the crime, will be administered in the same spirit of love. Persistent disobedience, however, is to be punished with separation from the society of the brethren. Thus Basil lays down that, 'He who fails in his obedience to the commandments of the Lord is at first to be treated by all with compassion as an ailing member, and the superior by his own exhortations will endeavour to restore him to health. But if he persist in his disobedience, and refuse correction, he must be more severely rebuked before the whole brotherhood, and every remedy of exhortation must be applied. And if, after much reproof, he still remains obdurate, and does not amend either himself or his ways, being, in the words of the proverb, "his own ruin," it will be necessary, with

[1] John xiii. 34; xv. 13; *Reg. Brev.* 98.

much grief and sorrow, to regard him as a decayed and useless limb, and to cut him off from the rest of the body.'[1] Disobedience is not merely an offence against the discipline of the community, but a sign of grave moral defects. 'Insubordination and defiance are the proofs of a multitude of sins, of tainted faith, of doubtful hope, of proud and overweening conduct.'[2]

We have thus seen, from Basil's own words, how the community life with its common rule of discipline and its one centre of authority was to be a field for the cultivation of what was then a much-needed virtue, obedience.

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 28. 1. On the various degrees of punishment cf. *Reg. Brev.* 44 and 122, which mention (*a*) deprivation of blessing, εὐλογίαν μὴ λαβεῖν, (*b*) deprivation of food, ἀσιτία, (*c*) separation, ἀφορισμός.

[2] *Reg. Fus.* 28. 2.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MONK AT PRAYER

As we might naturally expect, Basil very strongly insists upon the necessity of prayer for the true Christian, and more especially for the monastic community. Prayer, however, is not to be merely a spasmodic effort or an occasional expedient. It is to be constant and continuous, and for the devout Christian prayerfulness must become a natural and spontaneous habit of mind. There is a passage of great beauty on this subject in one of Basil's Homilies.[1]

'Ought we to pray without ceasing? Is it possible to obey such a command? These are questions which I see you are ready to ask. I will endeavour, to the best of my ability, to prove my case. Prayer is a petition for good addressed by the pious to God. But we do not rigidly confine our petition to words. Nor yet do we imagine that God requires to be reminded by speech. He knows our needs even though we do not ask Him.

'What do I say then? I say that we must not think that our prayer consists only in syllables. The strength of prayer lies rather in the purpose of our soul, and in deeds of virtue affecting every part and moment of our

[1] *Hom. in Martyrem Julittam*, 3–4.

life. "Whether ye eat," it is said, "or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."[1] As thou takest thy seat at table, pray. As thou liftest the loaf, offer thanks to the Giver. When thou sustainest thy bodily weakness with wine, remember Him who supplies thee with this gift, to make thy heart glad and comfort thy infirmity. Has thy need for food passed away? Let not the thought of thy merciful Benefactor pass away too. As thou art putting on thy tunic, thank Him who gave it thee. As thou wrappest thy cloak about thee, feel yet greater love to God, who alike in summer and winter has given us clothing convenient for us, both to cover what is unseemly and to preserve our life. Is the day over? Thank Him who has given us the sun for the service of our daily work, and has provided us with fire to brighten the night, and to serve for the other needs of life.

'Let night also afford other suggestions of prayer. When thou lookest up to heaven, and seest the beauty of the stars, pray to the Lord of all things visible, the great Artist of the universe, who "in wisdom hath made them all".[2] And when thou seest all nature sunk in sleep, then again worship Him who even against our will releases us from the continuous strain of toil, and by a short respite restores us once again to the vigour of our strength. Let not night herself be altogether the special property of sleep. Let not half thy life be useless in the dull torpor of slumber, but divide the time of night between sleep and prayer. And let thy very slumbers be exercises of piety; for

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31. [2] Ps. civ. 24.

the dreams of our sleep are wont to be for the most part the reflections of our thoughts by day.[1] As have been our conduct and pursuits, so will of necessity be our dreams. Thus mayest thou pray without ceasing, not in words, but by the whole conduct of thy life, so uniting thyself to God that thy life is one long, unceasing prayer.'

It was perhaps the greatest advantage of the monastery that there, if anywhere, continuity in prayer was possible. 'The undistracted life'[2] provided ample opportunity for a close communion with God in prayer and worship. In the quiet life of solitude 'we overcome our former manner of life in which we neglected the commandments of Christ, and so have power to eradicate the stains of sin by ceaseless prayer and constant attention to the will of God; for we cannot hope to apply ourselves to such contemplation and prayer amid the many things which distract the mind by leading it to worldly cares'.[3] Basil tells us that it is possible for the monk with his constant round of prayer and meditation 'to imitate on earth the choruses of the angels'.[4]

Assiduity in prayer is achieved through the practice of the presence of God, 'by being fully certain that God is before our eyes. For if when we see a prince or ruler, and converse with him, we keep our eyes fixed upon him, how much more shall he who prays to God keep his mind fixed upon Him who searcheth

[1] Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 32.
[2] ὁ ἀπερίσπαστος βίος. Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 34, *De Ren.* 1.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 6. 1.
[4] *Ep.* 2. 2.

the heart and reins, and so fulfil the Scripture, "Lifting up holy hands without fear and doubting." '[1]

It is perhaps surprising that Basil does not in his instructions make some mention of the duty of intercession. In modern times we have come to think of intercessory prayer as one of the chief functions which the monastic community is able to fulfil. We can only suppose that Basil treated this subject in the 'unwritten rules'[2] which he is said to have delivered by word of mouth to his monks. In his Letters he frequently asks his friends to remember him in their prayers, both in private and public. There is one Letter which is of special interest in this connexion, where Basil asks an assessor of taxes to exempt some monks from the general taxation. He pleads their poverty, and also adds, 'Men living such lives you will, I know, regard with special reverence; nay you will wish to secure their intervention, since by their life in the Gospel they are able to prevail with God.'[3]

Another passage is perhaps worth quoting: 'Be mindful therefore of God,' he writes. 'Keep the fear of Him in your heart and enlist all men to join with you in your prayers, for great is the aid of them that are able to move God by their importunity.'[4]

Among the hermits of the Desert this desire for continuous prayer had led to strange excesses. The task was indeed beyond the limits of human capacity. The individual worshipper, however great might be

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 8; *Reg. Brev.* 201.

[2] Cf. Greg. Naz. *Orat.* 43, 34 *νομοθεσίαι μοναστῶν ἔγγραφοί τε καὶ ἄγραφοι.*

[3] *Ep.* 284; cf. *Praev. Inst. Asc.* 1. [4] *Ep.* 174, To a widow.

his devotion, could not entirely disregard the needs of his physical nature. Accordingly we find that when monastic communities were formed various schemes were devised by means of which some such *laus perennis* should be practicable. Gregory of Nyssa tells us that in the convent over which Macrina presided there was a perpetual sequence of prayer and praise.[1] But this perpetuity was by no means a general rule. The Pachomian monks, for example, had their fixed hours of common prayer, though each individual was left free to continue his private devotions at his own discretion.

Basil also, while encouraging and indeed demanding private prayer, orders that there shall be certain definite times at which the community will assemble for Divine service. No doubt it is true that 'for prayer and praise all times are fitting', and that even 'in the midst of our work we can fulfil the duties of prayer',[2] yet none the less 'we must not neglect the appointed times of prayer which we have chosen for the brethren'.[3] Further, the services are to be varied as much as possible so as to avoid inattention.

We are told very little as to the actual form of these services, though we can infer that they consisted of psalms, prayers, and readings[4] from Scripture. Suitable persons are to be chosen to lead both the singing and the prayers.[5] Each service is to have its own peculiar significance and associations.

[1] *Vita S. Macrinae*, *Op.* iii. 970.

[2] *Reg. Fus.* 37. 2.

[3] Ibid. 3.

[4] Cf. *Hom. in Ps.* lix τὰ θεῖα λόγια . . . καθ' ἕκαστον σύλλογον ὑπαναγινώσκεται.

[5] *Reg. Brev.* 307.

Basil's account of the times of prayer which the monasteries are to observe is of no small interest, and is well worth translation.

1. 'Each hour of prayer brings its own special remembrance of God's benefits to us. We must pray in the early morning, in order that the first motions of the soul and mind may be dedicated to God, and that we may take nothing in hand until we have been gladdened by the contemplation of God, as the Scripture says, "I remembered God and was glad," [1] nor apply ourselves to any work until we have done that which is written, "Unto thee will I make my prayer, O Lord. My voice shalt thou hear betimes. Early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." [2]

2. 'Again at the third hour prayer is to be made and the brethren assembled, even though they be already dispersed to their various tasks. For, remembering the gift of the Holy Spirit which was given to the Apostles at the third hour, we must all worship together with one accord, in order that we too may be worthy to receive His sanctification. And we must also ask for His direction and instruction according to our needs, as the Psalmist says, "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free [3] Spirit." [4] Or again, "Let thy loving Spirit lead me

[1] Ps. lxxvii. 3 (LXX).
[2] Ps. v. 4–5.
[3] LXX, πνεύματι ἡγεμονικῷ.
[4] Ps. li. 12, 13.

forth into the land of righteousness." [1] We shall then return to our labours.

'And even though some few of the brethren be absent owing to work, or their distance from home, they must nevertheless perform without shrinking the obligations of the community. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." [2]

3. 'At the sixth hour also we have decided that prayer must be made, following the example of the saints, as it is written, "In the evening, and morning, and at noonday will I tell and proclaim; and he shall hear my voice." [3] And that we may be delivered from calamity and from the demon of the noonday, let the ninetieth [4] Psalm be recited at this hour.

4. 'The ninth hour, too, is a fitting time of prayer, as we learn from the Apostles in the Acts, where it is said that Peter and John went up to the temple "at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour".[5]

5. 'Moreover, when the day is finished there must be a thanksgiving for benefits received and good deeds done during the day, and also a confession of sins. And whether the fault be voluntary or involuntary, or secret and forgotten, whether it be by word, or deed, or in the thoughts of the heart, we must seek to appease God for them all by our prayers. For an examination of our past misdeeds is of great help to prevent us

[1] Ps. cxliii. 10. [2] Matt. xviii. 20; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 143.
[3] Ps. lv. 18. [4] E. V. xci. [5] Acts iii. 1.

from falling once again into the same faults. Wherefore it is said, "For what ye say in your hearts, feel compunction upon your beds." [1]

6. 'And again, as night begins, we must pray that our rest may be blameless, and free from fantasies, while at this hour also we repeat the ninetieth Psalm.[2]

7. 'That midnight also is a fitting time of prayer is proved by the example of Paul and Silas, as is recorded in the Acts, when it is said, "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praising God." [3] And the Psalmist says, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgements." [4]

8. 'Again it is right to prevent the dawn by rising to prayer, lest the break of day find us asleep in our beds, as it is written, "Mine eyes prevented the dawn, that I might meditate upon thy sayings." [5]

'None of these times of prayer are to be neglected by those who are resolved diligently to live for the glory of God and His Christ. And I am of opinion that diversity and variety in the prayers and psalms of the appointed hours are useful, and for this reason, that a want of variety often produces slothfulness in the mind, so that it becomes inattentive,[6] while by changing and varying the psalms and the reading [7] at each office our fervour may be rekindled and our attention renewed.' [8]

No less than eight separate services are mentioned as being obligatory for the monk under all circumstances.

[1] Ps. iv. 4 (LXX). [2] E.V. xci. [3] Acts xvi. 25, *ad sens.*
[4] Ps. cxix. 62. [5] Ps. cxix. 148.
[6] *ἀκηδίᾳ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ ἀπομετεωρίζεται.* [7] *τοῦ περὶ ἑκάστης ὥρας λόγου.*
[8] *Reg. Fus.* 37. 3–5.

We shall see that, in the order in which they are presented, they correspond to Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline, Nocturns and Lauds. It is something of a surprise to find such explicit mention of the Canonical Hours at this early date, and Basil's account of these services calls for careful investigation, as being of great value for the history of the Divine Office.

1. In the first place we have what apparently is a reference to Prime. This has been much disputed, and some would see in Basil's words merely a description of Lauds. Further, Cassian claims that he himself was the first to introduce the service of Prime.[1] But in that case it is hard to see why we should here have two separate accounts of one and the same meeting for morning prayers. It is more probable that Lauds was an adjunct of the night office, and that the monks were allowed a few hours rest after it. But in order that they should not sleep on until Terce, another service, namely Prime, was inserted. We cannot argue from Basil's quotations that Pss. v and lxxvii were recited at this office.

2. The express reference to the Holy Spirit in the account given of Terce is to be noted. It was more usual to associate the Passion of Christ with this hour.[2] But Basil prefers to mention that at this hour the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles,[3] and so all are

[1] *De Inst. Coen.* iii. 4 'hanc matutinam . . . canonicam functionem nostro tempore in nostroque monasterio primitus institutam.'

[2] Cf. Canons of Hippolytus, 27 'quia illo tempore Salvator voluntarie crucifixus est.' Baumer, *Gesch. des Breviers*, p. 52.

[3] Cf. also Cyprian, *De Or. Dom.* 34 'super discipulos hora tertia descendit Spiritus sanctus.'

to worship together with one accord, that they may be found worthy of the Spirit's sanctification. As the great defender of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, he is the more insistent upon this point. Any service in which special honour was paid to the Third Person of the Trinity would be of special value in those days of controversy.

3. With regard to the sixth hour, or Sext, we have again to observe that there is no reference to the Crucifixion,[1] but the Psalms are quoted in support of the practice of noonday prayer. It is interesting to note that Basil makes use of the reference to the 'demon of the noonday' in the ninety-first Psalm, which he orders to be recited both at this hour and at Compline.

4. At the ninth hour, or None, the example of the Apostles Peter and John is quoted to prove the ancient observance of this hour as a time of prayer. Again we miss the association with the Death of Christ.[2] It is noticeable that Basil has three Day-hours. Others made four, by dividing the midday office, and so completed the Seven Hours.[3]

5. In the case of the evening prayers, or Vespers, we have a much fuller notice. The service being of very early origin needed no justification, and so Basil merely gives us some idea of its actual contents. There is

[1] Cf. Can. Hippol. ibid. 'quia illa hora universa creatura perturbata est propter facinus scelestum a Iudaeis perpetratum.' Cf. also (Pseud. Bas) *Serm. Asc.* 1. 4 *ἡ δὲ ἐννάτη τοῦ δεσποτικοῦ πάθους ἐστὶ μνημόσυνον.*

[2] Can. Hippol. ibid. 'quia illa hora Christus oravit et tradidit spiritum in manus Patris sui.'

[3] Cf. *Serm Asc.* 1. 5 *ἐπειδὴ φησιν ὁ Δαβίδ, ὅτι Ἑπτάκις . . . τὴν μεσημβρινὴν προσευχὴν διατμητέον.*

to be both thanksgiving and confession. The latter is described in some detail, and it is perhaps possible to detect the words of a formal confession-prayer.[1]

In the treatise on the Holy Spirit we have a further reference to this service of Vespers. 'It seemed', he says, 'fitting to our fathers not to receive the gift of the light at eventide in silence, but, on its appearing, immediately to give thanks. Who was the author of these words of thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps, we are not able to say. 'The people, however, utter the ancient form, and no one has ever reckoned guilty of impiety those who say "We praise Father, Son, and God's Holy Spirit".'[2] Basil here shows that in his day a hymn of some antiquity, mentioning the Holy Spirit as Divine, was sung at the service of Vespers. The practice of the Church thus bears out the statement which was inserted into the Creed that the Holy Ghost 'together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified'.

6. We now come to a much-discussed passage in which Basil apparently refers to a service resembling Compline and recited before retiring for the night. It used to be asserted that until the time of Benedict the office of Compline was unknown.[3] But it is hard not to see in this passage a description of some such service, even though it may not have been in a very highly developed form.[4] It is quite probable that

[1] εἴτε ἑκούσιον, εἴτε ἀκούσιον, εἴτε που καὶ λάνθανον κτλ.

[2] *De Spir. Sanct.* 73.

[3] e.g. Batiffol, *Hist. of the Roman Breviary*, p. 36. Bäumer, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[4] Cf. Pargoire, *Rev. d'histoire et de littérature religieuse* (1898)'

Basil was the first to introduce this office,[1] and that Benedict in later days gave it a formal liturgical character and arrangement. It is not unlikely that the office of Compline originated from the primitive custom of reciting a prayer before sleep.

We note that Basil orders the recitation of the ninety-first Psalm, which is also included by Benedict in his service of Compline. The petition for deliverance 'from fantasies' is to be found in the hymn used at this service in later days.[2]

7. Basil next mentions the midnight prayers, or Nocturns, quoting the example of Paul and Silas, and giving a reference to Psalm cxix. 148.

On the general subject of night prayers he thus writes in a letter to Gregory: 'What dawn is to some, midnight is to athletes of piety; then the silence of night gives leisure to their soul; no noxious sounds or sights intrude upon their hearts; the mind is alone with itself and God, correcting itself by the remembrance of its sins, recalling holy precepts as a help against evil, and imploring aid from God for the fulfilment of its yearnings.'[3] But he gives us no information as to the actual composition of the midnight service. In another letter,[4] however, written in the year 375 to the clergy of Neocæsarea, he gives an account in some detail of the way in which his own people of

III. 281–88, 456–67. Vandepitte, 'Saint Basile et l'origine de complies,' *Rev. Augustinienne* (1903), II. 258–64.

[1] It cannot be proved that Pachomius ordered it in his Rule; cf. however, Besse, *op. cit.* p. 345.

[2] 'Procul recedant somnia et noctium phantasmata.'

[3] *Ep.* 2. 6.

[4] *Ep.* 207. 3.

Cæsarea under his direction conducted their vigils.[1] 'Now as to the charge (i. e. of innovation) relating to the singing of psalms, whereby my calumniators scare more especially the simpler folk, my reply is this. The customs which here obtain are agreeable to those of all the Churches of God. Among us the people go at night to the house of prayer, and in distress, affliction, and continual tears, making confession to God, at last rise from their prayers and begin to sing psalms. And now, divided into two parts, they sing antiphonally with one another, thus at once confirming their study of the Gospels, and at the same time producing for themselves a heedful temper and a heart free from distraction.[2] Afterwards they again commit the prelude of the strain to one, and the rest take it up; and so, after passing the night in various psalmody, praying at intervals as the day begins to dawn, all together, as with one heart and voice, raise the psalm of confession [3] to the Lord, each forming for himself his own [4] expressions of penitence.'

The midnight office of the monks would doubtless be modelled upon the practices of the Vigil thus portrayed.

But it is easy to see that in Basil's writings we have clear signs of the emergence of the three Night-hours, Vespers, Nocturns, and Lauds, from the primitive all-night Vigil. Otherwise we should not have had separate mention of the meetings for prayer to be

[1] Cf. also *Hom. in Ps.* cxiv. for an account of a night spent in prayer by the people.

[2] τὸ ἀμετεώριστον.

[3] Ps. li.

[4] No set formula, contr. Vespers.

held respectively at evening, midnight, and early morning.

8. In the account of Lauds there is little that requires comment, except that special attention seems to be called to the very early hour at which the service was held. Prime is the morning service which inaugurates the work of the day, whereas Lauds is to be said at a time when the day has not yet dawned. It is possible also to see in one of Basil's Letters a reference to these two services. He there writes: 'What state can be more blessed than to imitate on earth the choruses of angels? to begin the day[1] with prayer, and to honour our Maker with hymns and songs? Then, as the day brightens,[2] to betake ourselves, with the constant accompaniment of prayer, to our labours, and to season our work with hymns, as though with salt?'[3]

We can now leave the discussion of Basil's treatment of monastic prayers. It could be wished that he had left us more definite information on this subject, though he has given us enough to see the influence which monastic requirements exercised upon the formation of the Divine Office.

It is hardly necessary to state that for Basil prayer is not confined to petition. Thus he frequently asserts the need for meditation, 'in which the mind ascends to the contemplation of God.'[4] The private reading of Scripture is recommended as a devotional exercise. 'The study of Holy Scripture is the chief way of

[1] *εὐθὺς μὲν ἀρχομένης ἡμέρας εἰς εὐχὰς ὁρμῶντα.*
[2] *εἶτα ἡλίου καθαρῶς διαλάμψαντος.*
[3] *Ep.* 2. 2.
[4] Ibid.

finding our duty, for in it we find not only instruction as to right conduct, but also the lives of the blessed saints which are set before us as breathing images of godly living, that we may imitate their good works. Hence, in whatever respect each one feels himself to be deficient, by devoting himself to the imitation of such men, he finds, as from some dispensary, the due medicine for his ailment.'[1] It was for this purpose, no doubt, that the *Moralia*, or Gospel Ethics were composed. We learn also that the novice was required not merely to read Scripture, but to learn passages from it by heart, 'that he may have full assurance in his piety, and may not form his conduct according to the traditions of men.'[2]

We are not told by Basil whether the monks had any other reading. It is very doubtful, indeed, whether he would have addressed his Homily *Ad adolescentes, de legendis libris Gentilium*, to his monks, even though he there makes the remark, with regard to Socrates, 'Where conduct, as in this case, is so much on a level with Christian conduct, I maintain that it is well worth our while to copy these great men.'[3] While it is quite possible that the monks had their appointed times of sacred study, yet the idea that the monastery should 'promote divine learning' is nowhere made prominent in Basil's ascetic writings. Scripture is regarded as providing a practical rule of life, and is to be obeyed rather than investigated.[4] Yet it is important to remember that Basil and his

[1] *Ep.* 3. [2] *Reg. Brev.* 95. [3] Chap. 5.
[4] Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 235 εἰ συμφέρει πολλὰ ἐκμανθάνειν ἐκ τῶν Γραφῶν.

friend Gregory in their monastic retreat composed the *Philocalia*, or selection from the writings of Origen, a work requiring a high degree of learned and careful study.[1]

Besides meditation frequent reference is made to the duty of thanksgiving, and we know that it formed a considerable element in the prayers and praises of the monastic offices. Basil has also a Homily on the subject,[2] while in his *Moralia* he gives reasons from Scripture to prove that 'we should not keep silence as to God's benefits, but should give thanks for them'.[3] In his *Longer Rules* he affirms that the Apostolic command 'to give thanks in everything' is proved by both reason and experience, and that the various hours of prayer are so many occasions of thanksgiving.[4]

But joined together with the duty of thanksgiving is the need for frequent confession of sin. A general acknowledgement of transgressions was made, as we have already seen, both in the morning and evening. But such confession was by no means adequate for all cases. Thus Basil lays down that 'the monk is not to conceal his sins from his brother or from himself'. 'Every sin must be made known to the superior,[5] either by the sinner himself, or by those who know of

[1] Cf. R. T. Smith, p. 24: 'Origen was the most suggestive writer upon Bible subjects then accessible; certainly not the author who would have been chosen if the friends had been losing their intellectual vigour or spirit of free inquiry in a dull asceticism.'

[2] *De Gratiarum Actione, Op.* ii. 4.

[3] *Mor.* 55. 2.

[4] *Reg. Fus.* 37. 3.

[5] ἀναφέρεσθαι δεῖ τῷ προεστῶτι.

it, if they cannot themselves apply a remedy, according to the commandment of the Lord. For the evil that is kept secret is like some hidden sickness in the soul. As then we should not consider it a kindness if some one were to fasten up a deadly disease in our body, but rather be grateful to any one who would, even at the cost of a painful operation, expose the disease, and so either expel it by an emetic, or discover some other means of remedy. In the same way to conceal a sin, is to help the sinner to his death. For it is written, "The sting of death is sin." [1] And "Better is open rebuke than secret love." [2] Wherefore, a man should neither hide his sin from his neighbour, lest he become his brother's murderer instead of being his friend, nor indeed from himself. 'For he who doth not amend his ways is brother to him that destroyeth him.' [3]

Confession, however, is not to be made to any one at random, and great care must be exercised in the choice of a confessor.[4] 'For just as men do not expose their diseases to every one, but only to those who are skilled at applying remedies, so also confession of sins should be made to those who can give a remedy, as it is written, "Ye that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," that is, to remove them by your diligent care.' [5] Elsewhere in the *Rules* it is laid down that 'sins are to be confessed to those who have been entrusted with

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 56. [2] Prov. xxvii. 5.
[3] Prov. xviii. 9 (LXX).
[4] When the sisters make their confessions an elder sister is always to be present. *Reg. Brev.* 110.
[5] Rom. xv. 1; *Reg. Brev.* 229; cf. *Reg. Fus.* 26.

the dispensation of the mysteries of God.[1] For so those who were repentant are found to have confessed their sins to John the Baptist; and in the Acts, to the Apostles, by whom they had all been baptized.'[2] It has been remarked that 'this passage is noteworthy as being the most explicit evidence in favour of sacramental confession preserved for us in the monuments of primitive monastic tradition.'[3] There can be no reasonable doubt that Basil expected such confession to be made to priests. The reference to 'the dispensation of the mysteries' and to the sacrament of baptism would seem to be quite conclusive. The prevailing practice of the Church in his day was that when confession was made to an individual it should be made to either a bishop or a priest. That the clergy who were to hear confessions should be chosen with extreme care is only what we should expect. On the other hand there is some evidence to show that in certain quarters confession to other than priests had been allowed and encouraged. Clement of Alexandria, for example, does not confine the power of hearing confessions to the priesthood, but to the 'gnostic', or 'pneumatic'.[4] Origen also insists very strongly upon the necessity of a 'skilled physician' for the healing of the soul, though his testimony in this matter is far from conclusive.[5] And it does not follow that Basil would care to imitate the precedent set by Clement.

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. iv. 1. [2] *Reg. Brev.* 286. [3] Besse, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[4] Cf. *Quis dives salvetur*, c. 41; *Strom.* 6. 13, &c.
[5] Cf. *Hom. ii. in Ps.* xxxvii 'eruditum medicum' and 'satis perito medici illius consilio'; but contr. *Hom. ii. in Lev.* c. 4 'cum non erubescit sacerdoti Domini indicare peccatum suum.'

Nor was there any reason why the monks of Cappadocia should copy this peculiarity of the Christian gnostics of Alexandria. We have already shown that monasticism, as adopted for the Church by Basil, was not, as had been the case with Montanism, a 'pneumatic' movement.[1]

The existence of a charismatic ministry, entitled to hear confessions and pronounce absolution, in the Basilian monastery, requires further evidence than has yet been brought forward.[2] The common practice of the Church favoured sacerdotal absolution, and the monks would be most unwilling to incur a reputation for irregularity in their administration of the sacrament of penance.[3] The practice which arose in the Eastern Church in later times that monks, whether in priests' orders or not, might hear the confessions of the people was due to an exaggerated reverence for the monastic order, and does not prove anything as to the practices observed by the monks of Basil's day within their monasteries.[4]

There must have been some few priests available,

[1] *v.s.*, p. 29.

[2] Holl, in his *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griech. Mönchthum*, pp. 264 f., argues for the existence of such lay-confessors. But his arguments are not convincing and are vitiated by his erroneous conception of Basilian monasticism. Although the *Monastic Constitutions* more than once speak of 'the spiritual brotherhood', ἡ πνευματικὴ ἀδελφότης, κοινωνία, or συνάφεια, yet such expressions never occur in Basil's authentic works.

[3] Jerome says plainly that the power of the keys distinguishes the priest from the monk. *Ep.* 14.

[4] Marin, *Les Moines de Constantinople*, p. 96, shows that in early days the superiors were almost invariably priests. It is probable that Basil intended his superiors to be in priests' orders, for he ordained his brother Peter and set him over the community by the Iris.

not only for sacramental confession, but also for the celebration of the Eucharist. There are not many references to the Eucharist in the *Rules*, but there is enough evidence to show that the monks did not neglect the sacrament. Thus Basil discusses the question 'With what fear, or with what assurance, or in what frame of mind ought we to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ.' [1] He also lays down the rule that there is to be no celebration in private houses.[2]

But elsewhere he speaks more definitely of the value and necessity of the Eucharist for the Christian life. In the *Moralia* he is at some pains to collect the passages from the New Testament which bear upon this question.[3] And in one of his Letters [4] he shows plainly with what great reverence he regarded the sacrament, and how much he valued frequent participation. The Letter is also valuable as showing us the custom of the Egyptian solitaries in this matter. Basil writes as follows: 'It is good and beneficial to communicate every day, and to partake of the holy body and blood of Christ. For He distinctly says, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life." [5] And who doubts that to share frequently in life, is the same thing as to have manifold life. I, indeed, communicate four times a week, on the Lord's day, on Wednesday, on Friday,[6] and on the Sabbath,[7] and on the other

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 172; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 309.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 310 εἰ χρὴ εἰς κοινὸν οἶκον προσκομιδὴν (= ἀναφορὰν) γίνεσθαι.
[3] *Mor.* 21. [4] *Ep.* 93. [5] John vi. 34.
[6] The 'Station days'; cf. Tertull. *De Oratione*, 14.
[7] Cf. Apost. Constit. vii. 27, &c. Duchesne remarks that the Synaxis of Saturday was peculiar to the East. Cf. *Christian Worship*, p. 232. The Pachomian monks received communion on Saturdays. *v.s.*, p. 39.

days if there is a commemoration of any Saint. It is needless to point out that for any one in times of persecution to be compelled to take the communion in his own hand without the presence of a priest or minister is not a serious offence, as experience and long custom sanction such conduct. All the solitaries in the desert, where there is no priest, keep the communion at home and there partake of it themselves. And at Alexandria and in Egypt, each one of the laity, for the most part, keeps the communion at his own house, and partakes of it when he wishes.'

Thus we see that, though the monk was a mystic in the sense that his one great desire was for union with God, yet his mysticism did not lead him to neglect the ordinary means of grace as used by the Church at large. In the monastic scheme both prayer and sacrament [1] could find their rightful place.

[1] With regard to the *Liturgy of St. Basil* it is difficult to decide in what exact measure it is the work of Basil himself, and the question does not concern a discussion of his *Ascetica*. Brightman, in his *Eastern Liturgies*, pp. 522, 525, gives some interesting parallels between the *Liturgy* and *Reg. Fus.* ii. 3–4, a passage on the reasons for our love of God.

CHAPTER IX

THE MONK AT WORK

IDLENESS is a charge that has very frequently been brought against the monk. It is therefore important to notice that the duty of work is most strongly insisted upon by Basil in his monastic instructions and recommendations. Although, as we have seen, the life of the monk is to be quiet and without distraction from the outside world, yet it will demand a certain degree of strenuous activity. It is not the aim of the Christian athlete to live a life of ease and repose, but of vigorous training and toilsome exercise. Thus Basil says, 'All excuse of idleness is excuse of sin: for we must manifest our zeal, as also our endurance, even unto death. And it is plain from our Lord's own words that the slothful man is convicted of wickedness, as well as sloth, for He says, "Thou wicked and slothful servant".'[1]

'We have no need to speak of the great evil of idleness, for the Apostle plainly asserts that "he who does not work, neither shall he eat". As then each of us requires his daily sustenance, so also he must work according to his strength.'[2]

The hermit of the desert had been inclined to

[1] Matt. xxv. 26; *Reg. Brev.* 69.
[2] 2 Thess. iii. 10; *Reg. Fus.* 37. 2.

consider work as either a mortification of the flesh, or a necessity imposed upon him solely by his own bodily requirements. In either case it was merely a self-regarding obligation. Anthony, however, had set the example of work undertaken from other and higher motives—the duty of providing hospitality for visitors, and above all of ministering to the poor. Basil also adopts a similar attitude towards work.

'Work,' he says, 'is to be undertaken, not merely for the sake of keeping the body under subjection, but from love of our neighbour, in order that through us God may provide a sufficiency for those of the brethren who are in want, after the manner set forth by the Apostle in the Acts, when he says, "In all things I gave you an example, how that so labouring ye ought to help the weak."' [1]

Further, although the Gospel bids us take no thought for the necessaries of life, we are not on that account to desist from all work. 'For both our Lord's words and those of the Apostle teach us that we are not to take thought for ourselves, or to work merely for ourselves: but by our Lord's own command it is right and fitting to take thought for the wants of our neighbour, and so to work with greater diligence.' [2] 'For thus we shall not be accused of self-love, but shall obtain the blessing of the Lord, who says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."' [3]

The demands made upon the monk's time by prayer and devotion are to be fully satisfied, but not at the

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 37. 1. [2] *Reg. Brev.* 207. [3] *Reg. Fus.* 42. 1.

expense of work. The day is to be so ordered that both work and prayer may have their proper place. They are not, however, prohibitive of each other.

'Since under pretext of prayer or praise men are wont to avoid their work, it must be known that, although with regard to certain matters the saying of the Preacher, "To everything there is a season,"[1] is true, yet for prayer and praise, as for many other things, all times are fitting. For while our hands are engaged in work, we may with our voices, if it be possible, or rather if it serve to the edification of the faith, sing praises to God; or if not, we may praise Him in our hearts with "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs",[2] and thus in the midst of our work fulfil our duties of prayer.'[3]

But granted the necessity and the desirability of work, the next question to be asked is, what kinds of work, what trades and professions, are most suitable for the monk. The general rule is laid down that only those occupations are to be allowed which do not interfere with or distract the ordered quietude of the monastic life. Their materials must be easily procurable, and their products such as may be sold without undue trouble, so that it will not be necessary for the monk to come into frequent or harmful contact with either men or women in the outside world.[4]

The labour of the Basilian monk was to be 'productive', in the sense that it was to minister to the wants of the community or the needs of the poor, and

[1] Eccles. iii. 1.
[2] Col. iii. 6.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 37. 2.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 38.

not to the luxuries of the individual. In every kind of work the same rule of simplicity, utility, and cheapness must hold good. Thus we find that weaving and shoe-making are only to be pursued for the sake of providing such apparel as is absolutely essential. Building, carpentering, smith's work, and agriculture are spoken of with favour, as being necessary to the conduct of life, and are not to be rejected except when they are the cause of disturbances among the brethren, or interfere with the regular life of the community, by keeping them from their prayers and other religious exercises. Agriculture is specially recommended in that it provides the necessaries of life, and does not involve long journeys from one place to another.[1]

Basil and Gregory, when in Pontus they first embraced the monastic life, gave themselves to manual labour, and in particular to agriculture. Gregory recalls to his friend's mind their struggles with 'the garden which was no garden and had no vegetables', and complains that his neck and hands still bear the traces of their labours which they endured in drawing 'that mountainous wagon'.[2] But as numbers increased and a regular monastery was established by the bank of the Iris, it would become necessary to arrange a proper system of work for the members of the brotherhood. We can gather what were the main principles of that system from incidental references in the *Rules*.

It is interesting to notice that Pachomius also at first gave himself to gardening and other forms of manual labour, in order that the monks under his charge might

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 38. [2] τὴν γεώλοφον ἅμαξαν, Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 5.

keep their time entirely free for spiritual things. But as his followers became more numerous he too was obliged to organize the work of his communities. Thus we find that there were various houses arranged according to trades and presided over by masters who were responsible to the superior of the whole monastery.

The Pachomian community was thus a kind of labour colony in which every variety of work was carried on. But in these very large establishments it is possible that the 'tendency to turbulence' to which we have already referred was in some degree a result of their busy industrial life. Hence it is that Basil so strongly and emphatically asserts that the labour of the monks shall not be such as will endanger the devotional life of the monastery. 'We must give the preference to those occupations which do not disturb us, or prevent us from "attending upon the Lord without distraction".'[1]

In his choice of work the monk was not to be left to the mere caprice of his own wishes. The virtue of obedience, says Basil, is to be shown by a cheerful acceptance of the allotted task. Even if a man be specially skilled in some one craft, he is to put obedience before all else and do the work that is assigned to him by the superior.[2] He is also commanded to keep carefully any tools or implements which may be entrusted to him, and to remember that although he has the use of them, yet they are the common property of the brotherhood, and are consecrated to the service of God.[3]

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 35; *Reg. Fus.* 38.
[2] *Reg. Fus.* 41; *Reg. Brev.* 123, 142.
[3] *Reg. Brev.* 143, 144.

So, too, with regard to women's work, the wool which is used for weaving is to be regarded as a sacred trust and impartially distributed to the sisters by their superior.[1]

It is obvious that since work was obligatory upon all, production must often have exceeded the simple requirements of the community. The monks did not consume all the fruits of their assiduous labour. It became necessary, therefore, after due allowance had been made for the claims of charity and hospitality, to dispose of the surplus by sale. This would naturally involve occasional contact with the outside world. In the coenobitic life, however, the individual member was relieved from this responsibility, inasmuch as certain persons were officially appointed for the purpose. Basil is very careful that all commerce shall be under proper supervision. All goods are to be sold, if possible, within the confines of the monastic settlement, even at the risk of some pecuniary loss. But if it should be necessary to go outside, both customers and markets are to be carefully selected. Those who are chosen to sell the products of the community are to lodge together and not to separate from one another, that so they may be protected from association with undesirable company, and may join together both by night and day in their regular devotional exercises, in spite of their absence from the monastery.[2] The fairs and markets which are held at the shrines of the martyrs are to be avoided, and the monks are not to assist in perpetuating such abuses, for our Lord

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 153. [2] *Reg. Fus.* 39.

Himself in great indignation cleansed the temple of its traffic.[1]

In the conduct of the community life there was opportunity for other labour besides that of the field or the workshop. There was the obligation of service, of domestic duties within the monastery, which would afford occupation for a number of persons. The work of the kitchen, of attendance at table, and other such menial tasks, seem to have been undertaken by all the brethren in course. Thus we read: 'In thy turn of service, both by thy bodily toil and thy words of comfort show thy love for those upon whom thou waitest, that thy service may be acceptable, as being seasoned with salt. Suffer not another to perform thy task, that thy reward be not taken from thee and given to another, and he boast himself in thy riches, while thou art humbled. Perform all the duties of thy service with carefulness and decency, as serving Christ. For "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently".[2] And avoid, as if God Himself were thine overseer, the careless neglect which proceeds from arrogance and disdain, even though the task before thee be but of small account. For serving is a noble work, and will procure for thee the kingdom of heaven. It is like a net, full of all the virtues, and containing within itself every precept of God.'[3]

Thus in the Basilian community work was essential and obligatory, regulated and organized, dignified, and, above all, unselfish.

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 40: cf. *Reg. Brev.* 152. [2] Jerem. xlviii. 10.
[3] *De Ren.* 9.

CHAPTER X

VOCATION AND VOWS

In any consideration of the monastic life we must necessarily concern ourselves with such questions as those of admission, profession, novitiate, and vows. When once the rule of life and conduct has been formulated, and a practical scheme of administration and discipline evolved, the problem which next presents itself is, on what terms may applicants be received, and is such reception irrevocable, as involving a lifelong obligation on the part of the individual contracting. It must first be remarked that no one, however fervent might be his desire to enter upon the monastic life, was allowed to take such a step simply and solely on his own responsibility. He was free to become a hermit or solitary, whenever he wished, and wherever conditions were favourable for such an existence. But to become a monk, he must enter a community, become a member of a body, and it rested with the other members of that body to decide whether he should be admitted or refused.

And so we find that Basil in his *Shorter Rules* prescribes that all the brethren are to be present at the reception of the postulant. The superior has no power to receive him without the knowledge and consent of the community.[1] But admission was a gradual

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 112.

process, and required time for its completion. The applicant had to be examined and to undergo a period of probation before he could be admitted to full membership in the brotherhood. In this preliminary period there was much to be done: the novice must become familiar with the routine of prayer and work. He must also learn the full meaning of the renunciation which he had made, and of the obligations which he had undertaken in his adoption of the religious life.

In any early monastic endeavour such as that of Basil, we shall be disappointed if we look for precise and elaborate rules as to the character and duration of the novitiate. Monasticism was still, to some extent, in its experimental stage, and detailed regulations could not as yet be formulated. Experience, however, had decided that there should be a very strict investigation followed by a considerable time of testing and probation. Pachomius, for example, made it a rule that all applicants must wait seven days as suppliants at the door of the monastery, and endure a probation of no less than three years. Basil tells us very little as to the actual regulations for novices in the monasteries of Cappadocia. He gives directions that applicants are gladly to be welcomed. 'Since our Saviour Jesus Christ has said, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,[1] it is dangerous to reject those who desire by means of us to draw near unto the Lord, and to take upon themselves His easy yoke and the burden of His commandments which raises us to heaven.'[2] But yet they are to submit to careful

[1] Matt. xi. 28. [2] *Reg. Fus.* 10.

examination and a time of rigorous probation before they can be received into the ranks of the brethren. Inquiry must be made into their past life ; they are to make full confession of their sins, and their vocation is to be very carefully tested. If a man who has acquired some distinction in the outside world desires to be admitted to the monastery, he is to be given the most menial tasks, in order that he may give full proof of his humility. Only when he has passed all the tests applied by such as are skilled in these matters is he ' to be included in the number of those who have dedicated themselves to the Lord '.[1]

Basil lays down, as we have already seen, that the novice is to learn by heart passages from the Holy Scriptures, as a means of education and training.[2] He is also to keep silence,[3] and only to do such work as the superior approves.[4] In this connexion it is interesting to read what Basil advises in one of his letters,[5] written from Caesarea during his presbyterate :

' A certain man, as he alleges, on condemning the vanity of this life, and perceiving that its joys are ended here, since they only provide material for the eternal fire and then quickly pass away, has come to me with the desire of separating from the life of misery and wickedness, being resolved to abandon the pleasures of the flesh, and for the future to tread the road which leads to the mansions of the Lord. Now if he is firm and sincere in this truly blessed purpose, and has in

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 10 ; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 107.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 95 ; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 235–6.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 13.
[4] *Reg. Brev.* 105.
[5] *Ep.* 23, entitled Παραθετικὴ πρὸς μονάζοντα.

his soul this glorious and laudable passion, loving the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his strength, and with all his mind, it is necessary for your reverence to show him the hardships and distresses of the straight and narrow way, and to establish him in the hope of the good things which are as yet unseen, but are laid up in promise for all that are worthy of the Lord. I therefore write to entreat your incomparable perfection in Christ, if possible yourself to mould his character, so that, without any help from me, you may bring about his renunciation as may be pleasing to God.

'See too that he receive elementary instruction [1] in accordance with what has been decided by the Holy Fathers, and set forth by them in writing. You will take care also that all such things as are essential for true discipline may be put before him, that so he may be admitted to the ascetic life, having already of his own free will entered upon the contests of piety. For thus, having subjected himself to the easy yoke of the Lord, and by his conduct imitating Him who "for our sakes became poor" [2] and took flesh, he may run without fail to the goal of his calling, and receive the approbation of the Lord. Though he is anxious to receive here in this place the crown of his love for God, yet I have put him off, because I wish in conjunction with your reverence, to train him [3] for such contests, and to appoint over him as trainer [4] him whom he may select from among you. For such a man will exercise him well,[5] and by his constant and blessed care make

[1] στοιχειωθῆναι. [2] 2 Cor. viii. 9. [3] ἀλεῖψαι αὐτόν
[4] ἀλείπτην. [5] καλῶς παιδοτριβοῦντα.

him a tried wrestler, who will wound and overthrow the prince of the darkness of this world, and the spiritual powers of wickedness, with whom, as the blessed Apostle says, " is our wrestling." [1] What I had wished to do in conjunction with you, let your love in Christ do without me.'

This Letter is important, as showing the great pains which Basil took that the vocation of each applicant should be tried and tested, and that he should be carefully grounded by some elder monk [2] in the duties and requirements of the monastic life. Nor is this by any means the only place where the need of training for the novice is mentioned. In one of the *Shorter Rules*, for example, Basil describes ' How those who have laboured long in the work of God may help those who have but recently entered upon it '.[3] And in his treatise *On Renunciation* he has a long passage addressed to the novice, in which he says, ' If thou thus give thyself to a man of many virtues, thou shalt become heir to the goodness that is in him, and thou shalt be blessed above all others in the sight of God and man.'[4]

On the termination of his novitiate the postulant was to be admitted to the brotherhood after a formal profession, and Basil gives orders that this profession is to be made in the presence of reputable witnesses.[5] The reception of the new brother is to be an occasion for joyous thanksgiving and fervent prayer.[6] When the youth who has been educated in the monastery

[1] Eph. vi. 12.
[2] The choice is left to the applicant himself.
[3] *Reg. Brev.* 200.
[4] *De Ren.* 2–4.
[5] *Reg. Fus.* 15. 4.
[6] *Reg. Brev.* 212.

makes his profession Basil requires that among the witnesses of his reception there shall be certain ' chiefs of the Church '.[1] Are we to suppose, then, that the clergy played a part at this solemn function? It is quite possible that Basil wished to have the official sanction of the Church conferred upon the act of profession through which the novice was said to ' dedicate himself as an offering to God '.[2] It would seem that the ceremony began with a series of questions which were put to the novice, after which he made his profession in set terms by word of mouth.[3] Hence it is probable that a definite formula was used.

In reply to the question, ' What kind of profession should those who wish to live together the Godlike life demand from one another? ' the answer is thus given: ' That which the Lord has appointed for all them that would draw near to Him, saying, " If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." '[4] These words may very well have constituted the actual formula of reception to which the novice was required to give his assent.

We have now to consider the character and implications of the monastic vow. Did Basil intend it to be merely a temporary engagement, revocable at the wish of him who made it, or was it not rather to be an irrevocable and lifelong obligation? His opinion on the subject is clear enough. In his *Longer Rules* we can

[1] τοὺς προεστῶτας τῶν ἐκκλησίων. *Reg. Fus.* 15. 4. [2] Ibid.
[3] *Ep.* 199. Can. 19. ὁμολογίαν ἐναργῆ.
[4] Matt. xvi. 24. *Reg. Brev.* 2.

read his decision 'Concerning those who have devoted themselves to God, and then try to set aside their profession'. 'Any one,' he says, 'who has been received into the brotherhood, and then sets aside his profession, must be regarded as sinning against God Himself, before whom and to whom he has made his vows in profession; even as it is said, But if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? [1] For he who has given himself as an offering to God, and then betakes himself to another kind of life, is guilty of sacrilege, by stealing away himself, and so robbing God of His offering. On such a man the brothers will do right to close their doors, even if he return for shelter after only a short absence. For the rule of the Apostle is plain, which bids us separate ourselves from him that is disorderly, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.' [2]

It is often asserted that Basil introduced the practice of irrevocable vows into the monastic life.[3] It would certainly seem that he did his utmost to render the obligation contracted by the monk or nun as binding as possible, and that he is conscious of introducing a new rigour into the practice of the Church in this matter. We have only to read his Canonical Letters together with the passage above quoted to be convinced that this is so. Whatever earlier Fathers of the Church may have decreed from kindness and compassion, the

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 25. [2] *Reg. Fus.* 14.

[3] So De Broglie, Helyot, Bulteau, and Montalembert. R. T. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 223, takes the same view. Blomfield Jackson, however, doubts whether 'Basil's rule included formal vows of perpetual obligation in the more modern sense', *St. Basil*, p. lii.

virgin, says Basil, 'is to be regarded as the bride of Christ, and a chosen vessel dedicated to the Lord.' If, therefore, she breaks her vow, she is to be punished as though convicted of adultery.[1] This principle is extended to men also.[2] In the early days of monasticism, however, before the intervention of the State, it would be difficult to enforce such vows. But yet everything is done to impress upon the monk the fact that before God his vow is inviolable. He is bound by the laws and enactments of the Church, by the force of public opinion, and by his own conscience, even though the arm of the law cannot reach him. And indeed so far as the monastery itself was concerned, the vows made by the monk at his profession could not be recalled.[3]

As we have already seen, inclusion in the monastic order involved renunciation, continence, and submission to authority. It is true, then, to say that it necessitated poverty, chastity, and obedience.

A certain degree of 'stability' was also required of the monk. Basil lays down that he is not to leave the community into which he has been received, except for some very good reason. If, for example, the evil conduct of the brothers in the monastery renders the practice of virtue impossible, he has the right to go elsewhere. But before he does so, he is to open the eyes of the guilty brethren, and more particularly of the superior, to the peril of their case. In the event of such warning being of no avail, he leaves the society, 'not of brethren, but of strangers.'[4]

[1] *Ep.* 199. 18. [2] Ibid. 19. [3] *Reg. Fus.* 14.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 36; cf. Marin, *op. cit.* pp. 126–7.

When once the monastery has been entered, the monk is kept closely confined within its precincts. Egress is only possible with the express permission of the superior,[1] and only those monks are to be allowed to leave the monastery whose character is above all suspicion. They are to travel in companies, that they may the better avoid the temptations of the outer world. As they journey, they are to recite the psalms and prayers prescribed by their rule.[1] On their return, they are to be closely questioned by the superior as to the experiences they have met with on their travels. The example of the Apostle Peter, and of Paul and Barnabas, who gave the Church of Jerusalem an account of their doings, is quoted in justification of this requirement.[2]

Thus the monk is to have as little contact as possible with the world and its affairs. Even his own parents and relations are not to be allowed to visit him.[3] No one is to converse with the brethren, 'unless we are assured that his conversation is for the edification and perfection of the soul.' He is only to be answered by those monks who are specially chosen for the purpose.[4]

The impression produced by these stringent regulations, as also by the irrevocable 'intention' of profession, is that Basil wished it to be understood by the monk himself, by the Church, and by the world at large, that the adoption of the monastic life was a matter of the utmost conceivable seriousness.

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 120.
[2] *Reg. Fus.* 39; *Reg. Brev.* 311.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 32. 1.
[4] Ibid. 2.

In fact the monk was to be a man who would 'take seriously' both his religion and his vocation. Rome, it has been written, 'died laughing.'[1] But early monasticism was so deeply impressed with the wide prevalence of sin and misery in the world that it was compelled to take a very solemn view of life. Thus Basil, who himself possessed a very keen sense of humour, gives the order: 'Seeing that our Lord has condemned them that laugh, it is quite plain that for the faithful no occasions of laughter are permissible, more especially since there is such a multitude of those who through their transgression of the law dishonour God, and by their sins give themselves over to death. For such men we should mourn and lament.' And elsewhere he reminds us that although our Lord Himself was, as very Man, susceptible to all human emotions, yet we are nowhere told that He ever laughed. Joy, but not laughter, is the characteristic of the Christian. In accordance with this idea the Eastern monks in later days are often spoken of as 'penitents'.[2] Monasticism, indeed, was an attempt to re-awaken a proper seriousness and sense of responsibility in human life and conduct.

[1] Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, vii. 24 'populus Romanus moritur et ridet.'

[2] *μετανοοῦντες*. Cf. Benedict, *Regula*, xlix 'omni tempore vita monachi Quadragesimae debeat observationem habere', 'the life of a monk ought at all times to have about it a Lenten character.'

CHAPTER XI

WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND SLAVES

It is needless to say that monasticism was never thought of as being a matter which concerned men only, but rather as including women, and, in some degree, children within its scope. Christianity had done much for both women and children, and the monastic movement could not leave them out of account. In fact Gibbon, when he wishes to sneer at monasticism, says that its influence 'acted most forcibly on the infirm minds of children and females'. But in the same paragraph he mentions that the movement was recruited from 'millions, of either sex, of every age, and of every rank', so that his criticism is not really worth considering.[1] The fact is that the monastic ideal was independent of sex, and, to a large extent, of age as well.

And so we find that Basil's monastic regulations and admonitions apply equally well to both men and women. In the *Longer Rules* we have also some mention of the relations which are to exist between the two sexes in their separate endeavours to lead the religious life, while reference is made to the opportunities provided by the monastic community for the education of children. Some of the *Shorter Rules* are concerned with

[1] *Decline and Fall*, chap. xxxvii.

women only, but their recommendations are not in any way contrary to the regulations for men.

Basil, it is to be remembered, was induced to adopt the religious life by a woman, his sister Macrina, so that he was not likely to underestimate the monastic value of womankind. And in some sense it can be maintained that woman was first in the field with regard to the celibate and definitely religious life. Before the custom of addicting themselves for religious purposes to an unmarried life had made much progress in the Christian Church among men, it was already in vogue amongst women. In the first three centuries we find frequent mention of virgins in the Church, though they did not form a distinct 'order' until early in the fourth century. The order of virgins was singled out for special attack by the Emperor Julian in his persecution of the Christian Church. His assault, however, did not permanently affect the popularity of the institution; for in Basil's second Canonical Letter we read that 'by God's grace the Church grows mightier as she advances, and the order of virgins is becoming more numerous'.[1] It seems, however, that there were still many such women who lived amongst their families and friends without any other obligations than that of chastity, though there was a gradual tendency towards incorporation into communities. The life of the monastic sisterhood offered a more complete seclusion than was possible amid a secular environment. Hence we find that there were many communities of women in Egypt. The sister of St. Anthony

[1] *Ep.* 219. 19.

presided over one of them, and Pachomius, at Tabennisi, allowed his sister Maria to establish a convent of nuns on the opposite bank of the Nile. Discipline was sometimes a serious difficulty amongst these sisterhoods. Palladius tells us how Dorotheus, the superintendent of a convent, used to sit at an upper window from whence he could see the inmates and stop their quarrellings.[1] The female followers of Eustathius, Bishop of Sebaste, gave great offence to the Church by their behaviour, while what we may call the 'Strange Case of Glycerius and his Virgins', of which we read in Basil's Letters, is not by any means an edifying story.

A very different picture is presented by the convent which Macrina, Basil's sister, had founded at Annesi. St. Gregory of Nyssa has left us a very glowing account of Macrina and her nuns. Her community included her widowed mother, Emmelia,[2] the family servants, and many women from the best families in Cappadocia and Pontus. Her young brother, Peter, the future Bishop of Sebaste, was brought up in the solitude of this retreat.[3]

It was Macrina also who persuaded Basil to found his monastery on the opposite bank of the Iris, and the two separate but adjacent communities became the model for his monastic regulations. He had no intention of instituting any form of 'double monastery', and he is most careful that, in their relations with the monks, the

[1] *Laus. Hist.*, chap. 32.

[2] It is to be noted that the convents of women were recruited both from virgins and widows. Even married women might be admitted with the consent of their husbands. *Reg. Fus.* 12.

[3] *Vita S. Macrinae*, *Op.* iii. 971.

sisters should be under very strict supervision. But yet the women are not to be deprived of the advantages afforded by the spiritual ministrations of men. Pachomius had been no less careful in this matter of sex, and had ordered that the waters of the Nile must flow between his monastery and Maria's convent. Basil too was separated from his sister by the river Iris, but his directions are in some respects less stringent than those of Pachomius. He gives orders, however, that the monks are not to converse singly with the sisters. There must never be less than two persons on either side, nor more than three.[1] 'All occasion of offence must be avoided, and the concourse must be such as serves to the edification of faith. Reason itself tells us that it is not fitting for one person to converse singly with another. For it is written, "Two are better than one,"[2] and indeed more trustworthy. "And woe to him that is alone; for if he falleth, there is none to raise him up."'[3]

It was sometimes necessary to entrust certain monks with the temporal interests of the nuns. This task, however, was only to be given to men of advanced years, of tried character, and of grave aspect, who could 'dispense their words with judgement'.[4]

The superior himself must always exercise the greatest discretion. He must never on any account enter into any conversation, however edifying, with a nun without the presence of her own superior.[5] His interviews

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 33.
[2] Eccles. iv. 9.
[3] Ibid. v. 10; *Reg. Brev.* 220.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 33. Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 154.
[5] *Reg. Brev.* 108.

with the superior of the convent are to be as short and infrequent as possible.[1] He is not to override her authority by his directions. If he does so, she has every right to complain.[2] The great care which Basil took that the relations between the monastery and the convent should be above all suspicion is exemplified in his enactment that when a sister makes her confession one of the elder sisters must be present.[3] That there was need for such caution is obvious, especially when we consider that monasticism was still on its trial, and must be most careful of its reputation with both Church and world. But yet Basil insists that the monastic vocation is open to women no less than men, and that the adoption of the monastic life by certain of the women of his country is a matter for deep thankfulness. In a Letter to the Clergy of Neocaesarea he thus writes :

'And if women also have chosen to live the life of the Gospel, preferring virginity to marriage, leading captive the lust of the flesh, and living in the mourning which is pronounced blessed, they are blessed in their choice, in whatsoever part of the world they may be found.

'We, however, have few instances of this to show, for with us people are still in an elementary stage and are being gradually brought to piety. If any charges of disorderliness are brought against the life of our women, I do not undertake to defend them. One thing, however, I do plainly assert, and that is,

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 109. [2] *Reg. Brev.* 111.
[3] *Reg. Brev.* 110.

that these men, with their shameless minds and unbridled tongues, are ever in their fearless audacity uttering what Satan, the father of lies, has never yet dared to say. But I would have you know that we rejoice to have assemblies of both men and women, "whose conversation is in heaven," "who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." They take no thought for food or raiment, but ever remain undisturbed beside their Lord, continuing night and day in prayer. Their lips speak not of the deeds of men, but they sing hymns to God without ceasing, working with their own hands, that they may have to distribute to them that need.' [1]

It would be difficult to find a more eloquent eulogy of the monastic life, as it applies both to men and women, than is here set forth.

With regard to children and their education it will be best to give Basil's own words on the subject, and then add any comments which may be necessary. In the *Longer Rules* the question is raised as to the age at which professions should be received, and incidentally a good deal of information is given us about the educational work of the monastery: 'Since our Lord has said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," [2] and the Apostle praises him who from a babe had learned the sacred writings,[3] and orders us to bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord",[4] we are of opinion that every age, even the very earliest, is suitable for their admission. And

[1] Phil. iii. 20; Gal. v. 24; *Ep.* 207. 2.
[2] Mark x. 14.
[3] 2 Tim. iii. 15.
[4] Eph. vi. 4.

thus such children as have lost their parents we adopt of our own free will, being desirous, after the example of Job, to become fathers to the orphans. But those who are under the authority of their parents we admit in the presence of many witnesses, so as not to give occasion to those that seek an occasion against us, but rather to stop the mouth of them who speak evil of us. And they are to be admitted in the following manner. They will not be received at once into the membership of the brotherhood, lest they fail in their purpose and so bring reproach upon the life of piety. We shall train them rather in all godliness, as the common children of the brotherhood, assigning them, whether they be boys or girls, separate lodging and a separate table. In this way they will not show undue boldness or assurance before their elders, but rather, by not often meeting with them, will preserve a due respect for them. Nor when the elder members of the brotherhood are punished for the neglect of their duties, as may sometimes happen, will the juniors be the more prompted to sin, or feel that secret pride in their hearts which may very likely come from seeing elder men fail where they themselves have succeeded. For he that is young in mind is no different from him that is young in age. And so it is not to be wondered at if the same sins are often to be found in both old and young. Nor is it right that those things which older men may do with propriety should prematurely and improperly be attempted by the young, as the result of too frequent intercourse with their elders.

'And indeed, for this reason, as well as for the preservation of the general discipline, it is advisable that the chil-

dren and the regular monks should be housed separately. For so the monastery will suffer no disturbance from such sounds as may arise from the training and teaching of the young. But the prayers which we have appointed to be said by day will be common to both children and elders. For children often feel compunction when they see the zeal of their elders and betters, while these may receive no slight help in their prayers from little children. But in matters of sleep, vigils, times of meals, quantity and quality of food, it is fitting that the children should have their own rules and customs. And let a monk, well advanced in years, and of greater experience than the rest, who has given proof of his powers of patience, be set over them, so that he may by his fatherly kindness and instructive discourse correct the faults of his young pupils, applying to each offence its proper remedy; for thus the fault will be duly punished, while at the same time the soul will be trained in habits of obedience.' Examples of such punishments, made to meet the crime, are then described.

Basil next proceeds to give an outline of the course of studies to be pursued: 'The study of letters must also be such as befits the end in view. The children will become familiar with the words of Scripture, and instead of fables, they will be told true stories of marvellous deeds, and be instructed in the wise sayings of the Book of Proverbs.[1] Prizes will be offered for

[1] Cf. Miss Hodgson, *Primitive Christian Education*, p. 20: 'Mr. Quick once called the Book of Proverbs an "early treatise on education"; and unusual though the view may be, there is much in that wonderful collection of wise sayings to recommend the remark as just and justifiable'.

those who can best remember both words and subjects, that our end may be attained with ease and pleasure to the children, and without any pain or unpleasantness.

'Those who are educated in this way will soon become attentive, and acquire habits of concentration, if they are constantly asked by their teachers where their attention is, and what they are thinking about. For youth, by reason of its simplicity and innocence, and of its incapacity for falsehood, will readily confess the innermost secrets of the heart. And thus, in order to avoid frequent detection in wrongdoing, the child will refrain from foolish thoughts and will constantly recall his attention from them, because he fears the shame of public reprimand.'[1]

The discussion upon education here ends, and the further question of profession is introduced. When the children have attained to years of discretion,[2] they are to decide whether they wish to embrace the monastic life. They are to be under no compulsion in the matter, but are to make their own decision. If they wish to be professed, their profession must be made in the presence of creditable witnesses. At the same ceremony also those who have no desire for the monastic life will be solemnly dismissed.[3]

On the general subject of education Basil was well entitled to give an opinion. According to his friend Gregory, he was a most learned and accomplished scholar. 'His galleon was laden with all the learning

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 15. 1–3.

[2] In the case of girls, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, *Ep.*199.18.

[3] *Reg. Fus.* 15. 4.

attainable by the nature of man.' [1] His earliest education had been undertaken by his grandmother Macrina. He had then gone to school at Caesarea, and had passed from thence to the University of Athens. He was afterwards invited by the people of Neocaesarea to take charge of the education of their young, and he tells us himself how he refused their eager solicitations.[2] It is therefore a fact of great significance that such a man should have seen in the monastic community a powerful medium of Christian education.

It is to be remembered that the Church was not the only educational force in the time of Basil. Of the Roman Empire of that day the remark is true that ' Grammar schools were to be found everywhere, and every township of any importance possessed also teachers of rhetoric '.[3] Julian, in his propaganda against Christianity, drew attention to the fact that Christians did not always receive a specifically Christian education. He passed an edict forbidding Christians to teach ancient literature, unless they first proved their honesty and piety by sacrificing to the gods.[4] ' This edict was to produce one or both of two results, either young Christians must grow up without classical education, which was not likely to be their choice, or they must go to the schools of the heathen, who would, if they did their duty, give them a bias towards Hellenism.' [5] It would seem that Basil was quite content that the youth in his monasteries should be

[1] *Orat.* 43. 24. [2] *Ep.* 210. 2.
[3] Bigg, *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, p. 4.
[4] Julian, *Ep.* 42.
[5] Glover, *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century*, p. 69.

brought up without any kind of classical education.[1] Their instruction was to be moral and scriptural, but no mention is made of the ancient Greek literature. This is the more surprising when we remember the tone of his Homily on pagan literature,[2] and his own exceptional proficiency in classical learning. We can only say that, in his ardent devotion to the monastic cause, he seems to have set himself in complete revolt against both the education and morals of the day. And we have also to remember that the scholars in his monastery schools were either orphans whose education was undertaken from motives of charity,[3] or in many cases children who had been admitted in order that they might be trained with a view to the monastic life.

In the latter case it was perhaps natural that pagan learning was omitted from the curriculum. It is, however, a matter for deep regret that the education advocated by Basil should have been so severely and exclusively scriptural. Some years later we find St. Chrysostom writing to a Christian father as to the relative advantages of the public school and the monastery as places of education. He acknowledges that a classical training is of some value, and that both philosophy and rhetoric may be put to good use, while he also admits that for the Christian scholar the society of his equals in rank and fortune may often prove highly beneficial. But at the same time he most strongly insists that there are other and more important questions to be considered. The true father is he who cares for his son's

[1] *Cf. Reg. Brev.* 292 εἰ χρὴ ἐν ἀδελφότητι παιδίων βιωτικῶν εἶναι διδάσκαλον.

[2] *Op.* ii. 22.

[3] It was a free education ; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 304.

soul. Though parents are right in desiring that their sons should excel in intellectual attainments, yet they are not worthy of the name of parent unless they also provide for the moral education of their children. 'We may choose one of two alternatives, the public school and proficiency in worldly knowledge, or the solitude of the monastery and the edification of the soul. If the two things could be united, I should much prefer it, but as this cannot be, let us see that we choose the more precious.'[1] It was the fear of the bad moral influence of pagan literature which tended to alienate the minds of serious Christians from such studies, and the Fathers of the Church were more anxious for the purity of faith and morals than for the cultivation of literature.

As to the pedagogic methods which Basil recommends, there is little that calls for comment. It is interesting, however, to note that great stress is laid upon the need of attentiveness[2] in the pupils, just as inattention was also to be carefully guarded against in the devotions of the monk.[3] Further, it is possible that the insistence upon proportionate punishment[4] and the offering of prizes as a stimulus to industry are a reflection upon the harsh punishments in vogue in the public schools of the day.[5]

Whatever was the educational value of the monastic school at this time, there can be but little doubt that it

[1] *Adv. Oppugnatores Vitae Monast.* iii. 12–13.

[2] ὁ τοῦ μὴ μετεωρίζεσθαι ἐθισμός.

[3] *Reg. Brev.* 201–2 τὸ ἀμετεώριστον.

[4] Cf. *Reg. Fus.* 53 and the similar system of punishment for monks in *Reg. Fus.* 51 and *Reg. Brev.* 81. *v.s.*, p. 55.

[5] Cf. Ausonius, *Ep.* 22, and Chrysostom, *Hom. in* 1 *Tim.* vi.

must have formed an important recruiting-ground for the monastic movement. Many of the children who had been thus educated in the monasteries would be attracted by the quiet devotional life of the monks, and would desire to be professed.

We have now seen how monasticism included both women and children within its scope. But besides being independent of sex and also, very largely, of age, it showed itself to be superior to all class distinctions. Both 'bond and free'[1] were to be admitted to the monastic life. Yet the reception of slaves must often have raised questions of great difficulty. In his treatment of the problem Basil adopts the same line as St. Paul had taken with regard to the slave Onesimus. Thus if a runaway slave presents himself at the monastery gates, he is to be admonished and sent back to his master with a recommendation to mercy. As a general rule slaves are not to be admitted without their masters' consent.

But there may arise occasions when the obligations of morality and the service of Christ take precedence of duty towards an earthly master. 'If the master is a bad man, and gives an order which is contrary to law, and so compels the slave to break the commandments of his true Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, we must endeavour that the name of God be not blasphemed through the performance by the slave of some action which is displeasing to God. And we shall do this either by encouraging the slave to bear patiently whatever punishment may fall to

[1] Col. iii. 11.

him for 'obeying God rather than man',[1] or by assuring those who have received him that the trials which they may endure because of him are well-pleasing to God.'[2] The monastic movement, while it allowed the slave, under certain conditions,[3] to avail himself of the religious life, must also have helped to lighten the lot of such slaves as were compelled to remain with their masters. It is probable that the monastic life, with its insistence upon the universal duty of manual labour, did much to raise the position both of the working man and the slave. And we can feel sure that Basil felt the same horror for the institution of slavery which is expressed in the words of his brother Gregory, 'How can any one buy and sell him who has been made in the image of God?'[4] When the Eastern monk showed himself to be the friend of the slave he was acting according to the true spirit of Christianity.[5]

[1] Acts v. 29. [2] *Reg. Fus.* 11.

[3] Mutual consent was also required in the case of married persons. *Reg. Fus.* 12.

[4] Greg. Nyss. *Hom. in Eccles.* ii. 7.

[5] The Eastern monasteries, unlike those of the West, never themselves owned slaves; cf. Theodor. Cantuar. *Poenitentiale*, viii.: 'Graecorum monachi servos non habent, Romani habent.'

CHAPTER XII

FOOD AND CLOTHING

THOUGH the monk, as a true Christian, was not to be over-anxious as to food or raiment, we find that a good deal of attention is paid to these subjects in most ascetic and monastic writings. And indeed the question was one of no small importance. If any degree of asceticism was to be attempted, it was necessary that both the quantity and quality of food and clothing should be carefully regulated in accordance with ascetic principles. Hence we find that in Basil's *Rules* there is frequent mention of these matters. But his directions are one and all actuated by his ideas as to the place and value of ascetic practices in the monastic life. In Basil's scheme the monk did not live to abstain, but abstained to live. He subordinated the physical to exalt the spiritual. In other words, asceticism, as we have already had frequent occasion to affirm, was a means, not an end.

With regard both to food and clothing it is ordered that the monks must be guided by the principles of necessity, utility, and simplicity.[1] Both self-indulgence and ostentation are to be avoided, and the mean is carefully to be observed. While excessive abstention,

[1] Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 70 τῆς χρήσεως τὸ μέτρον ἡ ἀπαραίτητος ἀνάγκη τῆς χρείας.

such as was often practised by the Fathers of the Desert, is deprecated, an austere frugality is recommended. Yet Basil's directions in these matters, as in all others, are characterized by great breadth of outlook. Fasting, for example, is not to be a matter of private enterprise, encouraging competition, but an observance to be regulated by authority as best befits the welfare of the whole community.[1] In its purpose and meaning it is to be regarded as an exercise of continence or a proof of penitence, and not as a mere test of physical endurance, or an attempt to gain merit.

If fasting be carried to such extremes as to make a man unfit for the regular work of the monastery it is to be condemned as being nothing better than selfishness.[2] In all questions of abstinence individual circumstances are to be taken into account. 'There is no one rule to include all who practise piety.'[3] Age, health, work, must all be considered. The superior is to see that each has his due share, and is to make special regulations where necessary. Sickness and the fatigue occasioned by overwork or long journeys must be treated with leniency. Each is to receive with thankfulness the food assigned to him.[4]

In response to the question 'Whether all such things as are set before us are to be tasted', the answer is given: 'We must insist that for those who strive after piety, continence, (or temperance), is indispensable for the complete subjection of the body. For "Every man that striveth in the games is temperate in all

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 129, 138.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 128.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 19.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 19.

things ".[1] But that we may not be included amongst the enemies of God, whose conscience is seared with a hot iron, so that they abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanks by the faithful, all things, as occasion offers, are to be tasted by us. Thus all who see us will know that " unto the pure all things are pure " [2] and that " every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer ".[3] And the aim of continence is best secured when we use the cheaper kinds of food, and such as are necessary to sustain life, and so avoid both the sin of gluttony and of eating for pleasure. . . . Continence shows us the man who has died with Christ, and has mortified his members which are upon the earth. We know also that continence is the mother of chastity, the friend of health, and the great conqueror of all that hinders us from showing forth the fruit of good works in Christ.' [4]

We gather from the foregoing that eating is to be regarded as a necessity and not as a pleasure, and that food is to be sustaining but inexpensive. Elsewhere we are told that those foods are to be preferred which may be found close at hand, and can easily be prepared. The example of our Lord is quoted, who fed the multitudes from such small supplies as the disciples could procure ' in the desert place '.[5]

The object of food is to make us better workmen for God.[6] Excessive eating, no less than excessive absti-

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 25. [2] Tit. i. 15. [3] 1 Tim. iv. 4–5.
[4] *Reg. Fus.* 18. [5] *Reg. Fus.* 19. 2. [6] *Reg. Brev.* 196.

nence, will render the monk unfit for his work, and that which was intended to sustain the body will prove to be its destruction.[1] In his Letters Basil gives us some interesting details as to monastic fare. 'For a man in good health bread will suffice, and water will quench thirst; such dishes of vegetables may be added as best serve to strengthen the body for the exercise of its functions.'[2] Grace is to be said before and after meat. There must be a fixed hour for the repast when all will assemble. One meal a day was apparently the rule. Thus Basil writes: 'Let there be one fixed hour for taking food, always the same in regular course, that of all the four-and-twenty hours of the day and night barely this one may be spent upon the body.'[3] At meals there was to be reading, which 'must be listened to with greater pleasure than that with which we eat and drink, so that our mind may seem in no way to be distracted by bodily pleasure, but rather to rejoice in the words of the Lord, even as he who found them 'sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.'[4] Voracious eating is condemned, as being both an offence to the brethren and also a transgression of the Apostle's command, 'Whether, therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'[5]

Though in his requirements Basil does not show the same rigour as some of his predecessors, yet his ruling in these matters cannot be described as lenient. No doubt he was conscious that his practice was much

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 19. 2.
[2] *Ep.* 2. 6.
[3] Ibid.; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 136.
[4] Ps. xviii. 11; *Reg. Brev.* 180.
[5] 1 Cor. x. 31; *Reg. Brev.* 72.

less austere than that of the Egyptian or Palestinian monks. 'In comparison with the perfect,' he says, 'we are but children.'[1] Yet, when all allowances are made, it cannot be said that his regulations are other than severe.

A frugal meal once a day would seem to satisfy all the demands of a rigorous asceticism. Experience showed that such abstinence was for some of the monks a great hardship. Although in the case of Egypt it is not unreasonable to urge that the warm climate made it possible to exist on very little food, yet the Cappadocian winter can never have given much encouragement to ascetic practices. Nor can it be said that the native of Cappadocia or Pontus did not know what comfort was, and so could easily dispense with it. Basil's Homilies reveal a very different state of things. Some of the monks and nuns were drawn from the leisured classes, and the change from a life of luxurious ease and plenty to the austerity and extreme frugality of the monastery would often prove to be a matter of some difficulty.

In this connexion it is interesting to read the long diatribe against gluttony which occurs in the treatise *On Renunciation*. From Adam onwards 'the cunning snare of food' has been the Devil's chief stratagem. The man who eats secretly,[2] and is addicted to 'snacks'[3] is singled out for special reprobation. 'I have seen many who were rescued from the power of sin and restored to health, but not one of them was a secret eater or a glutton. These either deserted the

[1] *Ep.* 207. 2. [2] ὁ λαθροφάγος. [3] μικρᾷ γεύσει.

life of continence, or endeavoured to remain undetected amongst their brethren, where by their indulgence they proved themselves to be the fellow-soldiers of the Devil.' [1]

We learn from the *Rules* that the supply and distribution of food was presided over by an official specially appointed for the purpose. Though the superior was the ultimate source of authority in all other matters, yet in this department he delegated his powers to the cellarer, or steward.[2] Mention is made more than once of this official, whose task was of no small importance, inasmuch as he was responsible, not only for the physical comfort, but also for the temporal prosperity of the community. Directions are given that he is not to exercise his powers arbitrarily, but to do his work with a loving consideration for the brethren, attending equally to the wants of all without any suspicion of partiality.[3] He is to be given an assistant who will take his place, should need arise.[4] The duties of the cellarer are not to be undertaken by the monks in turn, as was the case with certain tasks of less responsibility.[5] Basil's description of the cellarer is very closely followed by Benedict in his *Rule*.[6] The office must have required a man who could combine a high degree of business capacity with a kindly and impartial sympathy for those under his care. Such men, if they did their duty, would form

[1] *De Ren.* 6.

[2] ὁ περὶ τὸ ἔργον τοῦ κελλαρίου. *Reg. Brev.* 147. ὁ οἰκονομῶν *Reg. Brev.* 149.

[3] *Reg. Fus.* 34. 2.

[4] *Reg. Brev.* 156.

[5] Ibid.

[6] chap. xxxi.

at once an admirable example for the Church,[1] and an agreeable contrast to the officials of the imperial government.

On the subject of clothing it is first to be noticed that Basil decides in favour of a distinctive dress for the monk. In doing so he could not claim to be original, since some form of monastic habit would seem to be as old as monasticism itself. And in Asia Minor the monks of Eustathius were distinguished by 'the coarse cloak, the girdle, and the shoes of untanned hide', as Basil himself tells us.[2] In writing to his friend Gregory he also gives us a description in some detail of what he considers to be the proper clothing for the monk. 'From the humble and submissive spirit comes an eye sorrowful and downcast, appearance neglected, hair rough, dress dirty; so that the demeanour which mourners are at pains to assume may seem to be our natural condition. The tunic should be fastened to the body by a girdle, the belt[3] not going high above the waist, like a woman's, nor left slack, so that the tunic flows loose, like an idler's. The one aim of dress is that it should be a sufficient covering alike in summer and winter. As to colour, avoid brightness, and in material, that which is soft and delicate. To aim at bright colours in dress is to be like those women who try to beautify themselves by giving their cheeks and hair an unnatural hue. The tunic ought to be thick enough not to want other help to keep the body

[1] At the Council of Chalcedon it was ordered that every bishop should appoint a steward for the management of Church property. *Can.* 26.

[2] *Ep.* 223.

[3] Cf. *Reg. Fus.* 23 Περὶ τῆς ζώνης.

warm. The shoes should be cheap but serviceable. In a word, what one has to regard in dress as in food is the necessary.'[1] This agrees with what is said in the *Rules*, though they are somewhat more moderate in tone, possibly as the result of some years of experience. In answer to the question, 'What is the modest apparel prescribed by the Apostle?' Basil replies as follows: 'That which best and most properly answers to the needs of each, and takes into account season, locality, persons, and circumstances. For reason itself demands that there should be different clothing in summer and winter, and that the workman should not wear the same kind of clothes as he who is not working, or the server as he who is served, or the soldier as the civilian, or the man as the woman.'[2]

The monk is not allowed to have one garb for work and another for show. The same clothing will serve both for night and day. Since all the brethren have one end in view, namely, the religious life, uniformity in dress is desirable.[3] In each monastery there is to be an official whose special duty it will be to dispense clothing to the members of the community.[4] He is entitled to give out warm clothing if the rigours of the winter so require. No member is allowed to dispose with his old garments on his own authority.[5] Clothing which is made of hair is only to be worn as a penance.[6] Basil makes the subject of misfits an occasion for a short exhortation. 'If the garment is

[1] *Ep.* 2. 6.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 210.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 22. 1–2.
[4] *Reg. Brev.* 87.
[5] Ibid.
[6] *Reg. Brev.* 90.

too small or too large for the wearer, let him make known his wants with becoming modesty. But if his complaint be that it is too poor, or not new enough, let him remember the words of the Lord, "The workman"—and not every man—"is worthy of his sustenance."[1] And let him ask himself whether he has done any work which is worthy of the commandments of the Lord, or of His promises, and then he will not ask for other clothing, but will be anxious lest he is receiving that which is beyond his deserts. For what has already been said with regard to food must be regarded as a rule in all things that concern our bodily needs.'[2] Elsewhere it is ordered that the monk is not to aim at a becoming simplicity in his apparel.[3]

The picture of the monk with his ragged and dirty habit, worn both by night and day, is very far from attractive to the modern reader. But we have to remember that this very unattractiveness had its uses. It testified to the sincerity of the monk who was content to discard all ornament and dispense with every comfort as a protest against the luxurious habits of the day.

We are told that the Emperor Julian by 'the affected filthiness of his personal appearance' wished to show his admiration for the old philosophers.[4] So too by his dress and demeanour the monk was to be a living advertisement for the Christian 'philosophic life'. Thus Basil remarks in his directions as to the monastic

[1] Matt. x. 10.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 168.
[3] *τὸ εὐτελές, ἵνα πρέπῃ αὐτῷ.*
[4] Pullan, *Church of the Fathers*, p. 266.

habit : ' This peculiarity of dress is of great use, inasmuch as it proclaims the wearer, and testifies to his profession of the Godlike life. For indeed, those we meet will require from us such behaviour as is congruous with our habit. For improper or unseemly conduct is not so noticeable in an ordinary individual as in one who makes great pretensions. Thus when some common or quite unknown person engages in street brawls, or gives vent to bad language, or passes his time in taverns, or misbehaves himself in some such way, no one takes much notice, but regards these things as merely the natural events of everyday life. But suppose that a man who has undertaken the life of perfection commits some small blunder, all notice it at once, and reproach him with it, as it is written, "they will turn again and rend you."[1] In this way the special habit of the professed is in itself a means of education[2] for the weaker brother, since it keeps him from mischief even against his will. And just as the soldier, the senator, and others each have their own particular uniform from which we can tell their rank, so also the Christian ought to have his own special dress.'[3] It would seem, then, that although the cowl could not make the monk,[4] it might help to keep him constant to his ideal.

[1] Matt. vii. 9.
[2] *παιδαγωγία τίς ἐστι.*
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 22. 3.
[4] *v.s.* p. 3.

CHAPTER XIII

HOSPITALITY AND CHARITY

In his material requirements the monk had not only himself to consider. It was natural that from time to time he should have visitors, while the poor would be sure to come to him for help in their necessities. Hence we find that hospitality and charity are questions to which early monastic writers gave considerable attention.

To the Oriental hospitality was not so much a virtue as an instinct. To the Christian it was a duty sanctioned both by the practice and precept of Holy Scripture, being illustrated by the Old Testament, and directly commanded in the New. To the monk it was an obligation faithfully to be observed, but at the same time regulated and controlled in accordance with the monastic ideal of undistracted devotion to God. Basil, as we might expect, attaches great importance to a proper practice of hospitality. In the *Moralia* he gives the Scriptural reasons why we should 'receive guests with frugality and without disturbance'. Our Lord used only five loaves and two small fishes when He fed the multitudes, while He rebuked Martha for her 'much serving'.[1] In the *Rules* he treats the subject at some length. It is only necessary to give

[1] *Mor.* 38.

the substance of his remarks. It must be noticed that he is always most anxious for the reputation of his monasteries. Visitors, for example, are not to go away with an impression that the monks live in luxury.[1] If a guest does not care for the entertainment provided, he need not come again. 'Suppose that a stranger comes to us. If he is a brother, and leads the same life, he will not object to having the same table. For he will only find what he has left at home. . . . But if he is of the world, he will learn from our deeds that which words could not teach him, and will see a practical example of frugality with contentment. He will go away with a recollection of true Christian fare, and of poverty endured without shame for Christ's sake. If, however, he is not thus impressed, but is disposed to ridicule our doings, he will not trouble us a second time.'[2]

The entertainment of guests is the affair of the community, and not of the individual. It is, therefore, necessary that the superior himself shall receive them. In his absence another monk is to be chosen to fulfil this duty. The superior will conduct the conversations with the visitors, and will answer any questions that they may ask. No brother is to be allowed to correct the superior in his answers, but may make suggestions to him in private.[3] The arrival of a visitor is not to interrupt the work or devotions of the monastery, except in cases of the most urgent necessity.[4] All guests, whether monks or laymen, are to be invited to share in the prayers of the community. The

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 20. 1–2.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Reg. Fus.* 45.
[4] *Reg. Brev.* 313.

only stipulation made is that they shall be 'friends of God'.[1] Monastic hospitality may not always have been entirely disinterested, and the reception of visitors would often prove an effective method of propaganda. Thus in the *Shorter Rules* the question is discussed 'Whether anyone who wishes to avail himself of the monastery only for a short time, is to be allowed admission?' Basil's decision is as follows: 'It is right to give him admission, even though the result may be doubtful. For perhaps he will be benefited by his short stay, as not infrequently happens, and become completely enamoured of our life, when he has made full proof of our discipline, and has found it to be very different from what he had suspected.'[2] In all ages the invitation to 'come and see' may often prove the most satisfactory refutation of the opponents of monasticism.

Our Lord Himself has shown us that the highest form of hospitality is to 'bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind'.[3] From the very first the monk recognized the duty of such care for the poor. He claimed to lead the 'Apostolic life', and both the teaching and example of the Apostles encouraged him in his charitable intentions. It might of course be urged that one who had vowed himself to poverty had nothing to give, but the great object of his renunciation had been that it might enable him to 'give to the poor'.[4] The needs of the brotherhood and its various communities had, of course, to be considered, but they

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 312.
[2] *Reg. Brev.* 97.
[3] Luke xiv. 13.
[4] Mark x. 21.

were not the only consideration. We have already noticed, in our discussion on monastic labour,[1] that Basil requires the monk to work, not merely as a cure for idleness, but also 'that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need'.[2] The monk was not to escape the ordinary obligation of the Christian to deeds of charity, but rather to make his love of the poor a proof of his great devotion to God. The Church had already set him a grand example in her practice of almsgiving, and the poor were still, no doubt, the 'Altar of the Church'.[3] But yet we find in Basil's Homilies many signs of a tendency in certain quarters to neglect this duty. He complains of the rich that 'they cover the bareness of their walls with tapestries, and do not clothe the nakedness of men. They adorn their horses with rich and costly trappings, and despise their brothers who are in rags.'[4] In fact his denunciations are so severe that he has been claimed as a Socialist who denied all rights of property.[5] Though such a claim is made quite wrongly,[6] yet Basil's forcible language does show that a strong reminder of the duty of charity was needed. The monastery might well seek to remedy the shortcomings of ordinary Churchmen in this matter.

Further, the economic conditions of life under the imperial administration always left a large scope for private charity. And it would seem that in Basil's

[1] *v.s.* p. 59. [2] Eph. iv. 28; *Reg. Fus.* 37. 1.
[3] Polycarp, *Ep. ad Phil.* 4, of the widows supported by the Church.
[4] *Hom. in Divites*, 4. [5] So Nitti, *Catholic Socialism*, p. 67.
[6] Cf. *Reg. Brev.* 92; where he points out it is not the mere possession of goods which is wrong but their abuse.

time there was more than ordinary necessity to come to the help of the poor. Though free labour was largely on the increase and there was a corresponding shrinkage in the number of slaves, yet the condition of the working classes was very far from prosperous. Taxation and usury both sent their victims to swell the ranks of the destitute. There was need of some exceptional effort to remedy this state of things. The Emperor Julian endeavoured to relieve the prevailing distress by means of legislation, and converted Church custom into civil law, complaining that humanity and philanthropy were only to be found amongst Christians. Valens also attacked the difficult question of taxation, but the problem was beyond his powers. As bishop, Basil had to undertake the care of the poor in his diocese, and we frequently find him intervening in cases of excessive taxation. In time of famine also he came to the rescue of the distressed, so that Gregory calls him 'a second Joseph'.[1] But the ordinary diocesan administration of relief was probably insufficient for the mass of poverty which was everywhere to be found.

Hence it was to the monks, with their vows of poverty and their obligation to charity, that men looked for some help in the solution of this problem. The monastery did indeed offer one way out of the difficulty. To the rich man who embraced the monastic life it gave an escape from 'the deceitfulness of riches', while his money and possessions could be devoted to a worthy cause. It is probable that the insecurity of property at this time would in some cases make the renunciation of worldly

[1] *Or.* 43. 36.

goods less irksome. A man of business also might welcome the peace and rest of a monastery after the bustle and uncertainty of industrial life.[1] To the struggling working classes the monastery offered a secure and quiet life such as they could not enjoy elsewhere. To the slave, on the other hand, it could give the opportunity for free labour, in addition to the blessings of independence and social equality. But all this presupposes the definite profession of the monastic life. It may, therefore, be objected that the monastic movement attempted to cure economic evils by running away from them, and that the monk's cell provided a last refuge for those who had 'despaired of the state'. This is very far from the case. The monastic movement, besides being in itself a social experiment on strictly communistic lines, made an honest endeavour to correct in the world at large the results of an economic system which it could not alter. The monasteries became recognized centres for the distribution of relief. Nor was it always necessary to embrace the monastic life in order to help on this social work. The gifts and bequests of the faithful would be welcomed gladly by the monasteries, who could distribute them to those who were in real need. The bishop[2] had hitherto been the official guardian of the poor, but the monks were better able to give time and

[1] Cf. *Ep.* 2. 2, on the trials of men in the world with their 'misfortunes in trade, quarrels with neighbours, lawsuits, the risks of the merchant, the toil of the farmer. Each day as it comes darkens the soul in its own way'.

[2] The bishop's methods were too often those of the imperial largesse.

care to the matter. We find that Basil lays down certain definite principles which are to guide the monks in their administration of charity. The individual monk was not to be allowed to give anything to the poor on his own responsibility. A special official was to be appointed to preside over the distribution. There was to be no indiscriminate giving, but carefully 'organized' charity.[1] Basil's words on this subject are worth quoting, 'Since our Lord has declared that "it is not good to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs", and yet has also approved the saying "even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table",[2] the brother who has been appointed for the purpose will distribute only after careful investigation. And let any one who does anything contrary to his decision be punished as disturbing the discipline of the community.'[3]

We can also gather what was Basil's teaching on this matter from the letter of a friend, in which 'the very godly bishop' is described as uttering the following sentiments: 'Experience is needed in order to distinguish between cases of genuine need and those of mere greedy begging. For whoever gives to the afflicted gives to the Lord, and from Him shall have his reward; but he who gives to every vagabond casts to a dog, a nuisance indeed from his importunity, but deserving no pity for his plea of poverty.'[4]

But besides the relief of the poor there was another sphere in which Basil wished the monastery to show its

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 101. 298. [2] Matt. xv. 26–27. [3] *Reg. Brev.* 100.
[4] Bas. *Ep.* 150: entitled Ἀμφιλοχίῳ ὡς παρὰ Ἡρακλείδου.

usefulness, namely, the care of the sick. Basil himself, as a chronic invalid, would have great sympathy with such a work. In his youth he had acquired some proficiency in medical science, and would so be able to take a professional interest in the matter. In his *Longer Rules* he is at some pains to prove that 'the practice of medicine is in accordance with the aim of piety'.[1] Various arts and sciences, he declares, have been given to man by God out of sympathy for his weakness. Agriculture, for example, was granted him to supply his bodily needs after the Fall. So too, medicine was given to lighten the effects of his curse. But medical treatment must be as simple as possible, and only used when need so requires. We are not to put our whole trust in medicine. Christ Himself sometimes healed immediately, at other times mediately; so we also may be healed sometimes 'suddenly and invisibly', but at other times by material means. Disease may be either a punishment or a temptation at Satan's request. St. Paul was afflicted to prevent him from being more than human, as is shown by the incident of the Lycaonians.[2] We must not think that medicine is the prime cause of restored health, but rather the goodness of God. But just as we use agriculture, though it is God who 'gives the increase', so also though it is only God Himself who can heal, we may still make use of the science of medicine.

We are not here concerned with the origin of hospitals as charitable institutions for the reception of the sick or infirm. It would seem that by the time of Julian

[1] *Reg. Fus.* 55; cf. *Reg. Brev.* 140. [2] Acts xiv. 12.

the Christian Church was well known for her activities in this direction, and the restored paganism was to imitate 'the impious Galileans' by the erection of numerous hospitals.[1] We possess a good deal of information as to the hospital which Basil as bishop built for his people at Caesarea. Gregory describes it as 'the new city',[2] while Sozomen speaks of 'the Basileias, that most celebrated hospice for the poor, founded by Basil from whom it received the name which it still bears'.[3] We are also told by Gregory that Basil himself frequently visited his hospital, and that there were many lepers among its inmates.[4] He received much assistance from the monks who came to the support of their bishop in this great charitable work. It would seem that there were other such hospitals in his diocese,[5] and we know also that Eustathius had a similar institution at Sebaste, presided over by Aerius, the famous heretic.[6] It is probable that from the very first the monastery and the hospital were very closely connected—no doubt to their mutual advantage. In one of the *Shorter Rules* reference is made to the care which was taken of the sick by the monks. Some of the patients, it appears, were men of doubtful character and inclined to be unruly. Thus the question is asked, 'Since we who minister to the sick in the

[1] Cf. Sozomen, *Eccl. Hist.* v. 16. Julian, *Ep.* 49.

[2] *Or.* 43. 63. Ramsay, *The Church and the Roman Empire*, p. 264, says that 'the new city caused the gradual concentration of the entire population of Caesarea round the ecclesiastical centre, and the abandonment of the old city'.

[3] *Eccl. Hist.* vii. 34.

[4] *Or.* 43; ibid.

[5] Presided over by Chorepiscopi, *Epp.* 142, 143.

[6] Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* 75.

hospital are taught to treat them as brethren of the Lord, how ought we to treat one who is not of such a character'. Basil briefly answers 'that he is to be admonished by the Superior, and if he persists in his evil conduct he is to be expelled from the hospital'.[1]

From this short review of the charitable activities of the Basilian monks we are justified in maintaining that Basil did not mean the monastic life to be one of devout selfishness. It cannot be said that the monk was not intended to 'make himself either agreeable or useful in *this* world'.[2] He was to be not only the Christian gentleman,[3] but also the Christian philanthropist.

Finally, it is to be noticed that in the midst of such zealous care for the material welfare of the sick and poor, their spiritual needs were not forgotten. 'The poor' had 'the Gospel preached unto them'[4] in this re-awakening of Christian energies. The monk by his freedom from worldly cares was well equipped for such 'apostleship'. Basil himself set an admirable example in the matter, for we read that through his missionary efforts 'in a short space of time the face of the whole province was changed'.[5] In fact the monastic

[1] *Reg. Brev.* 155; cf. also *Reg. Brev.* 286, as to 'whether a sick monk is to be received into hospital (εἰς ξενοδοχεῖον)'. The Hospital at Caesarea is spoken of as τὸ πτωχοτροφεῖον, with its μνήμη, or chapel. *Epp.* 150, 176.

[2] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv, of the Early Christians.

[3] *v. s.*, p. 4.

[4] Matt. xi. 5.

[5] Rufinus, *Eccl. Hist.* ii. 9 'Basilius Ponti urbes et rura circumiens . . . ita brevi permutata est totius provinciae facies, ut in arido campo videretur seges fecunda, ac laeta vinea surrexisse.'

movement was provided with every possible method of evangelization. The education of children, the exercise of hospitality, the relief of the poor, the care of the sick, were all so many outlets through which the quickening of the devotional life might make a lasting impression upon the world at large.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

We have now briefly to consider the results of our investigation. The first observation to be made is that what seems to be the most striking characteristic of Basil's scheme is its comprehensiveness. The monastic ideal is set before us in all its fullness, and with all its implications. Basil would have us see that the subject is neither unimportant nor uninteresting. He himself realized that the appearance of the monastic movement was a matter of great moment for the Christian Church. Hence in his writings he examines the whole question of monastic theory and practice with great care. He investigates the doctrinal basis of the monastic ideal, and finds it to be scriptural both in origin and intention. He fixes the centre of the monastic life in the religious instinct, in the love of man for God, and the desire for union with Him. The method for the attainment of such union is the ascetic way of renunciation and self-denial, involving also discipline and obedience, work and prayer. The best environment for the purpose is that of the community. The scope of the monastic life includes all classes, both sexes, and, in some degree, all ages. Its great obligations are not to be undertaken without a most sure conviction of vocation, while its principles extend to every depart-

ment of life and conduct, even to small details of food and clothing. Further, the monastic ideal is social in implication, and involves the exercise of both hospitality and charity. We cannot but acknowledge that this is a grand picture of the religious life in all its varied activities which Basil sets before us. We have, however, to ask the question, has it ever been realized?

The evidence of history is at first sight unsatisfactory. Though Eastern monasticism is everywhere Basilian in name and form, so that there are no separate monastic orders in the East, and the modern Orthodox monasteries are very little different from those of the fourth century, yet in spirit it is, in most cases, very far from the Basilian ideal. The Eastern monk would seem to have reverted to the monasticism of the Fathers of the Desert.[1] There is much prayer and recitation of immoderately long offices, and also much fasting, but the claims of both industry and charity have been neglected. Though monasticism holds a very important place in the Orthodox Church, since all the higher clergy are recruited from its ranks, yet it appears to be stagnant and ineffective. The Eastern monk claims that, like the great Father, he leads the Gospel life,[2] but none the less he is not the power for righteousness that Basil intended him to be. The fact is that the monks of the East, while they have throughout their history professed Basilian principles, and have everywhere adopted, amplified, and interpreted his

[1] Cf. Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, p. 354.

[2] Ibid. p. 355: 'They all follow the rule of St. Basil, but they are indignant if one calls them Basilians. They do not belong to St. Basil's order, they explain, but St. Basil belonged to theirs.'

Rule,[1] have not been true to the whole of his teaching. They have forgotten his warnings against laziness and selfishness, and have failed to see with their master that the monastic ideal is social as well as devotional, practical as well as contemplative. It is lawful to conjecture that, had they been more truly Basilian, they would have done more for their Church, though it would be difficult to maintain that she would have been better without them.

But both West and East have felt the influence of Basil. Benedict advises his monks to read 'the *Rule* of our holy Father Basil', and includes it amongst 'the instruments whereby well-living and obedient monks may attain to virtue.'[2] And as we read Benedict we see how much he owed to his predecessor in the composition of his *Rule*. It was through him that Basil proved to be 'a light', not only of Cappadocia and the East but also 'of the whole world'.[3] And in a sense it was the monks of the West who most fully carried out Basil's ideals. Monasticism, like Christianity itself, has had its origins in the East and its finest developments in the West. The Western monks had to apply Basilian principles to the conversion of new nations. This saved them from a stagnation such as befell their Eastern brethren. It was thus in the struggle with the pagan barbarism of the West that the spirit of Basil found its truest expression.

This is not the place to discuss at any length the general question of the value of the monastic life, with

[1] e.g. the *Constitutiones* of Theodore, and the *Novellae* of Justinian.
[2] *Regula* LXXIII. [3] *v. s.*, p. 4.

its mystical aim and ascetic practice. But it is necessary in any treatment of a subject which concerns asceticism to remember that what is not of value for all may yet be of value for some. The Gospel theory of asceticism, which Basil followed, was that the special renunciation of the ascetic life is for him only 'who can receive it'.[1] It is manifestly unfair to condemn the ascetic ideal off-hand, merely because it is not capable of universal application.[2] It need hardly be said that, if the race of men is to continue, all cannot be monks or nuns. But to argue, therefore, that no one ought ever to embrace the monastic life is illogical and absurd. To regard monasticism as the only serious form of Christianity is entirely foreign to the true Christian spirit, and the attempt to force the ascetic ideal upon the whole clergy of the Church was not only a failure but a disaster. Yet we cannot on that account refuse the monastic life a place within the Church. It is true, indeed, that all real Christianity involves in some degree the practice of asceticism, for the Gospel teaches us that self-realization is achieved only through self-denial and self-sacrifice.[3] But that is not all. There may be some who feel called to devote themselves to the service of God, and find that such service is only possible for them in the monastic life. There must always be 'men of violence'[4] who will take the Kingdom of God by storm, when other methods are of but

[1] Matt. xix. 12.

[2] Cf. H. Black, *Culture and Restraint*, chap. viii, 'The Failure of the Ascetic Ideal.'

[3] Mark viii. 35: 'Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.'

[4] Matt. xi. 12 (R.V.).

little avail. That there have been many such men and women in the past, the history of monasticism plainly shows. They have been saints whose example and influence has leavened the whole Church. And we cannot maintain that the need for them has passed away. It is doubtful, indeed, whether any Church in any age can dispense with the services of the monk. Monasticism would seem to be a permanent element in Catholic Christianity. The Church of England, in particular, has been reproached with a cultivation of the 'gentilities' to the neglect of a deeper spirituality and devotion. But the revival in this country of the community-life has done much already to increase devotion and to help on the work of evangelization.

There are some who tell us that the true salvation of our Church lies in a proper concentration of her energies, and that revival and reinvigoration can be brought about only by such means.[1] Monasticism may then come to the aid of the Church, not merely as an ascetic reaction against luxury and worldliness, but rather as a serious attempt to provide certain definite centres of enthusiastic devotion from which the true Christian spirit of love and self-denial may permeate both Church and nation. But by whatever means revival may come, if we are not once again to close the doors upon enthusiasm, we shall need another Basil to secure for it a welcome and a home within our Church.

[1] Cf. Hobhouse, *The Church and the World in Idea and History*, pp. 15, 310, 340.

APPENDIX

A

Introduction to the Longer Rules.

1. By the grace of God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have set before ourselves one and the self-same end, namely, the life of piety, are met together in one place. And while you indeed are plainly desirous to learn somewhat of the things that pertain to salvation, I for my part must proclaim the judgements of God, remembering night and day the words of the Apostle, 'By the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears'.[1] And the present time is most convenient for us, and this place provides quiet and a release from the tumult of the outside world.

Wherefore, let us pray together one with another, both that we may give to our fellow-servants their due measure of seed, and that you who receive the word may, like the good ground, bring forth the perfect and manifold fruit of righteousness, even as it is written.[2]

I beseech you, therefore, through the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that we now take thought for our souls, that we lament the vanity of our past life, and that we strive for the future to the glory of God, and of His Christ, and of the holy and adorable Spirit. Let us not remain in this careless ease, ever neglecting through our slothfulness the present, and putting off to the morrow or the far future the first beginning of our works, lest, being found all unready with good works by Him who demands of us our souls, we be cast forth from the joy of the bride-chamber, weeping uselessly and in vain, and

[1] Acts xx. 31. [2] Matt. xiii. 23.

lamenting our ill-spent life, when repentance can no longer avail. 'Now is the acceptable time,' says the Apostle, 'now is the day of salvation.'[1] This is the time of repentance, that of reward: this of toil and labour, that of receiving wages: this of patience, that of comfort. Now God is the helper of such as turn from the evil way; then He will be the terrible examiner of all men's thoughts, words, and actions. Now we enjoy His long-suffering; then we shall know His justice, when we shall rise again, some to eternal punishment, others to eternal life, and each one of us receive according to his works. How long shall we put off our obedience to Christ, who has called us to His heavenly kingdom? Shall we not rouse ourselves? Shall we not recall ourselves from our accustomed manner of life to the careful life of the Gospel? Shall we not set before our eyes that great and terrible day of the Lord, on which those who by their good works have drawn near to the Lord shall be received into the kingdom of heaven, but those who by their lack of good works have been set on the left hand shall be enveloped in the fire of Gehenna and everlasting darkness? 'There,' as it is said, 'shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.'[2]

2. Although we profess to desire the kingdom of heaven, yet we have no care for those things by which it may be gained. And though we undertake no labour which the Lord commands yet we imagine in the folly of our heart that we shall receive equal honours with those who have resisted against sin even unto death. Who has ever at the time of sowing remained at home idle or asleep, and then, when harvest has come, filled his bosom with sheaves? Who has ever gathered grapes from vine that he has not planted and cared for? Those who have laboured receive the fruits: honours and crowns are for conquerors. Who would ever crown him who had not even stripped for the

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 2. [2] Matt. xxv. 30.

fight? For it is necessary not only to conquer, but also to contend lawfully, according to the words of the Apostle;[1] that is, not to neglect even the smallest of such things as are commanded, but rather to perform each thing as we have been ordered. For it is said, 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find,'[2] not doing anywise, but 'so doing'. And 'If thou hast offered aright, but hast not divided aright, thou hast sinned.'[3]

But we, thinking perhaps that we have fulfilled one commandment,—nor indeed should I say fulfilled, for all the commandments are joined one to another according to the sound and proper meaning of Scripture, so that if one be broken, the others are of necessity also broken,—do not expect the wrath of God for those which we have transgressed, while for the keeping of one commandment we dare to look for honours and rewards.

He who from the ten talents entrusted to him has retained one or two, and has restored the others, is not declared to be honest, because he has restored the greater part, but is shown to be both wicked and covetous because he has kept back the rest. Why do I say 'kept back'? For he that was entrusted with one talent, and gave it back whole and unharmed as he had received it, was nevertheless condemned because he had not added anything to that which was given him. He that has honoured his father for ten years, and then strikes him but one blow, is not honoured as a benefactor, but is condemned as a parricide. 'Go ye,' said the Lord, 'and make disciples of all the nations teaching them' not to observe some things, and neglect others, but 'to observe all things whatsoever I command you.'[4] And the Apostle writes in like manner, 'Giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed; but in everything commending ourselves

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 5.
[2] Luke xii. 43.
[3] Gen. iv. 7 (LXX).
[4] Matt. xxviii. 19–20.

as ministers of God.'[1] For if all these things had not been necessary for the attainment of our salvation, all the commandments would not have been written: nor would they all have been declared necessary for our observance.

What do my other virtues profit me, if, through calling my brother a fool, I am to be condemned to Gehenna? For what profit has he who is free from the multitude of sins, if he by one single sin be brought into slavery? For it is said, 'Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin'.[2] And what gain has he who is free from many diseases, if his body be afflicted with some sore disease?

3. So, then, some one will say, is it not folly for the multitude of Christians who keep not all the commandments to keep any of them? And, therefore, it is good to remember the blessed Peter, who, though he had done so many good deeds, and had received such great blessings, yet for his one fault was told, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me'.[3] And I need not say that he had shown no sign of negligence or contempt, but had rather given proof of his reverence and devotion.

And yet some one may say that it is written, 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,'[4] as though the very calling upon the name of the Lord was enough to save him that called. Let him rather hearken to the Apostle who says, 'How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?'[5] And even if thou believest, hear our Lord who says, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven'.[6] For indeed he who does the will of God,

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 3–4.
[2] John viii. 34.
[3] John xiii. 8.
[4] Joel ii. 32.
[5] Rom. x. 14.
[6] Matt. vii. 2.

but not as God wills, nor from the love which he has towards God, his zeal for good works is fruitless, according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who says, 'This they do that they may be seen of men: verily I say unto you, They have received their reward'.[1] Wherefore Paul was taught to say, 'And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing'.[2] And, to sum up, I perceive that there are three different dispositions which inevitably lead us to obey. Either through fear of punishment we turn away from that which is evil, and so are of a slavish disposition; or, seeking to make gain by the reward, we fulfil the commandments for the sake of their benefits, and for this reason are like men of gain; or else we do good for the sake of the good itself, and from love of Him Who gave us the law, rejoicing that we are thus thought worthy to serve the great and good God, and so we have the disposition of sons. Nor will he who keeps the commandments from fear, and is always expecting the penalty of sloth, obey some orders, and neglect others, but he will have always the same dread of the judgement which comes upon all disobedience.

And, therefore, he is pronounced blessed who fears always with reverence. And he stands firm in the truth, for he can say, 'I have set God always before me, for he is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall,'[3] as never choosing to neglect anything that is right. And, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord'. For what reason? Because 'he hath great delight in his commandments'.[4] Wherefore it is not possible for those who fear to neglect any of God's orders, or to perform them carelessly.

Nor, indeed, will the man of gain choose to neglect or transgress any of the commandments. For how will he

[1] Matt. vi. 5.
[2] 1 Cor. xiii. 3.
[3] Ps. xvi. 8.
[4] Ps. cxii. 1.

win the reward of his labour in the vineyard, if he does not fulfil that to which he agreed? For if he come short in even one thing that is needful, he makes himself useless to his master. And who will pay a reward to him that has done wrong?

The third service is that of love. Who, then, that seeks to please the Father, and in great things wins His favour, will choose to grieve Him in that which is least? But let him much more remember the Apostle, who says, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed'.[1]

4. Where, then, shall we put those who transgress most of the commandments? They neither worship God as Father, nor believe in Him as the Promiser of great things, nor serve him as Master. 'If, then, I be a father,' He says, 'where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?'[2] For 'He that feareth the Lord hath great delight in his commandments'.[3] But 'by thy transgression thou dishonourest God'.[4] And how, if we prefer the life of pleasure to the life of obedience to the commandments, can we expect for ourselves a life of blessedness, fellow-citizenship with the saints, and joy among the angels in the presence of Christ? Truly these are the imaginations of a foolish mind. For how shall I be with Job, if I have not received even light affliction with thankfulness? Or how shall I be with David, if I have not shown myself patient with my enemies? Or how with Daniel, if I have not sought after God with constant abstinence and careful prayer? Or how with any of the saints, if I have not followed in their steps? Who is so unjust an arbiter of the games as to judge him who has never even contended to be worthy of the same crown as the victor? What general ever gives an equal portion of the spoils to those who have been victorious and to those who have never even

[1] Eph. iv. 30.
[2] Mal. i. 6.
[3] Ps. cxii. 1.
[4] Rom. ii. 23.

appeared in the battle? God is good, but He is also just. And it is the nature of the just to recompense worthily, as it is written, 'Do well, O Lord, unto those that are good and true of heart. As for those such as turn back unto their own wickedness, the Lord shall lead them forth with the evildoers'.[1] He is merciful, but He is also a Judge. For He says, 'The Lord loveth mercy and judgment'.[2] And, therefore, it is said, 'I will sing of mercy and judgment unto thee, O Lord'.[3] And we have learnt who it is that receive mercy, for He says, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy'.[4] Thou canst see with what discernment He uses mercy. He is neither unjustly merciful, nor mercilessly unjust. For God is both merciful and just. Let us not then half know God, nor make His kindness an occasion of sloth. For this cause are His thunders and lightnings, that His goodness may not be despised. He that maketh the sun to rise, also punishes with blindness. He that giveth the rain, also rains fire. Those show His goodness, these His severity. Let us then either love Him for those, or fear Him for these, that it be not said to us, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath'.[5] Since then neither can they be saved, who do not those works which are according to the will of God, nor is it without danger to neglect any precept—for it is the height of arrogance to make ourselves the judges of our Lawgiver, and to approve some of His laws and reject others—we who endure the conflict of piety and lead the life of calm and rest, regarding such a life with honour, as being our fellow worker in the keeping of the Gospel decrees, must one and all take careful heed that no command-

[1] Ps. cxxv. 4–5. [2] Ps. xxxiii. 5. [3] Ps. ci. 1.
[4] Matt. v. 7. [5] Rom. ii. 4–5.

ment escape us. For if the man of God must be perfect—as it is written, and as our words have already shown—it is before all things necessary that he be made clean and perfect in every commandment, according to ' the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ' ; [1] for by the Divine law even the clean beast, if he had any blemish, was not accepted as a sacrifice to God.

If, therefore, any one think that he be lacking in anything, let him bring it forth that all may examine it in common. For it is easier through the careful scrutiny of the many to find out that which is hidden, seeing that God allows us to find that for which we seek, by means of the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since, then, ' necessity is laid upon me, and woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel ',[2] so also there is equal danger for you, if you are slothful in your search, or if you show yourselves careless and negligent in the keeping of tradition, or in fulfilling it by good works. Wherefore the Lord says, ' The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day '.[3] And, ' That servant which knew not his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes ; but he that knew, and did not, neither made himself ready according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes '.[4]

Let us pray then that I may blamelessly dispense the word, and that the teaching may bear fruit in you. And since then we know that the words of Divine Scripture will rise up before us at the judgement-seat of Christ—' For I will reprove thee,' He says, ' and set before thee thy sins ' [5]—let us hearken diligently to that which is spoken, and seek earnestly to carry out the Divine decrees ; for we know not on what day or at what hour the Lord will come.

[1] Eph. iv. 13. [2] 1 Cor. ix. 16. [3] John xii. 48.
[4] Luke xii. 47–48. [5] Ps. l. 21.

APPENDIX

B

Introduction to the Shorter Rules

THE good God, 'that teacheth man knowledge,'[1] gives command by his Apostle to those who are entrusted with the gift of teaching that they should continue in their teaching.[2] And those who desire the edification of holy doctrine He exhorts by Moses, saying, 'Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.'[3] Wherefore it behoves us who have been entrusted with the ministry of the word, always to be zealous for the perfecting of your souls. But though sometimes we must needs bear witness publicly before the whole Church, yet often we must allow ourselves to be consulted privately by any one who may come to question us concerning that which belongs to sound faith and right conduct according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; for by means of these two things the man of God is perfected. And you too must allow nothing to pass fruitless and unheeded, but besides that which you hear in public, must also ask privately concerning those things that are convenient, and so order aright all the quiet hours of your life. Seeing, then, that God has brought us here together, and that we have much freedom from the troubles that are without, let us not turn aside to any other work, or give ourselves again to sleep, but rather pass the hours of the night which remain in careful thought and in searching out that which is needful, fulfilling the words of the blessed David, 'In the law of the Lord will he meditate day and night.'[4]

[1] Ps. xciv. 10.
[2] 2 Tim. iv. 2.
[3] Deut. xxxi. 7.
[4] Ps. i. 2.

APPENDIX

C

Decrees of the Synod of Gangra, 340 A.D.

THE Synodal Letter of Gangra, written to the Bishops of Armenia, gives the following reason for the calling of the council: 'The most sacred Synod of the Bishops has assembled on account of certain necessities of the Church, and for investigation of the affair of Eustathius; and having found that many improprieties have been committed by his followers, it has, therefore, determined to remove the evils which Eustathius has brought about.'

The causes of complaint are first enumerated and the text of the decrees then follows:

Canon 1. 'If any one despises wedlock, abhorring and blaming the woman who sleeps with her husband, even if she is a believer and devout, as if she could not enter the kingdom of God, let him be anathema.'

Canon 2. 'If any one condemns him who eats meat, though he abstains from blood, things offered to idols, and things strangled, and is faithful and devout, as though by his partaking he has no hope of salvation, let him be anathema.'

Canon 3. 'If any one teaches a slave, under pretext of piety, to despise his master, to forsake his service, and not to serve him with goodwill and all respect, let him be anathema.'

Canon 4. 'If any one maintains that when a married priest offers the sacrifice, no one should take part in the service, let him be anathema.'

Canon 5. 'If any one teaches that the house of God is

to be despised, and likewise the assemblies[1] there held, let him be anathema.'

Canon 6. 'If any one, avoiding the churches, holds private meetings, and in contempt of the Church performs that which belongs to her alone, without the presence of a priest with authority from the bishop, let him be anathema.'

Canon 7. 'If any one appropriates to himself the tithes of produce which belong to the Church,[2] or distributes them outside the Church, without the consent of the bishop, or of one appointed by him, and will not act according to the bishop's wishes, let him be anathema.'

Canon 8. 'If any one gives or receives such offerings without the will of the bishop, or of one appointed by him for the administration of it, both giver and receiver shall be anathema.'

Canon 9. 'If any one lives unmarried or practises continence, avoiding marriage with abhorrence, and not because of the beauty and holiness of virginity, let him be anathema.'

Canon 10. 'If any one of those who for the Lord's sake remain unmarried exalts himself above those who have married, let him be anathema.'

Canon 11. 'If any one despise those who in faith observe the *agape*, and for the honour of the Lord invite their brethren, and refuses to take part in these invitations because he lightly esteems the matter, let him be anathema.'

Canon 12. 'If any one from pretended asceticism[3] wears the philosopher's cloak,[4] and as if he were thereby made righteous, despises those who wear ordinary coats[5] and make use of other such clothing as is everywhere customary, let him be anathema.'

[1] *συνάξεις.*
[2] *καρποφορίας ἐκκλησιαστικάς.*
[3] *διὰ νομιζομένην ἄσκησιν.*
[4] *περιβολαίῳ χρῆται.*
[5] *τοὺς βήρους φορούντων.*

Canon 13. ' If a woman from pretended asceticism alters her dress, and instead of the customary female dress assumes male attire, let her be anathema.'

Canon 14. ' If a woman leaves her husband and would separate herself through abhorrence of marriage, let her be anathema.'

Canon 15. ' If any one forsakes his children, and does not educate them, and, as far as he can, train them in fitting habits of piety, but neglects them under pretext of asceticism, let him be anathema.'

Canon 16. ' If children, especially those of the faithful, forsake their parents under pretext of piety, and do not shew them due honour, on the plea of esteeming piety as the higher duty, let them be anathema.'

Canon 17. ' If a woman from supposed asceticism cuts off her hair, which has been given her by God to remind her of her subjection, and thus renounces the command of subjection, let her be anathema.'

Canon 18. ' If any one from supposed asceticism fasts on Sunday, let him be anathema.'

Canon 19. ' If an ascetic without bodily necessity but from pride neglects the fasts which are observed by the whole Church, as though he possessed full understanding,[1] let him be anathema.'

Canon 20. ' If any one out of pride regards with abhorrence the assemblies[2] of the martyrs and the services[3] there held, or the commemorations of the martyrs, let him be anathema.'

See Mansi II, 418–421, and Hefele, *History of the Church Councils*, II, pp. 326–339, whose translation, with some slight changes, is here used.

[1] *ἀποκυροῦντος ἐν αὐτῷ τελείου λογισμοῦ*, 'perfecta in eo residente ratione.'

[2] *τὰς συνάξεις.* [3] *λειτουργίας.*

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KU-996-237